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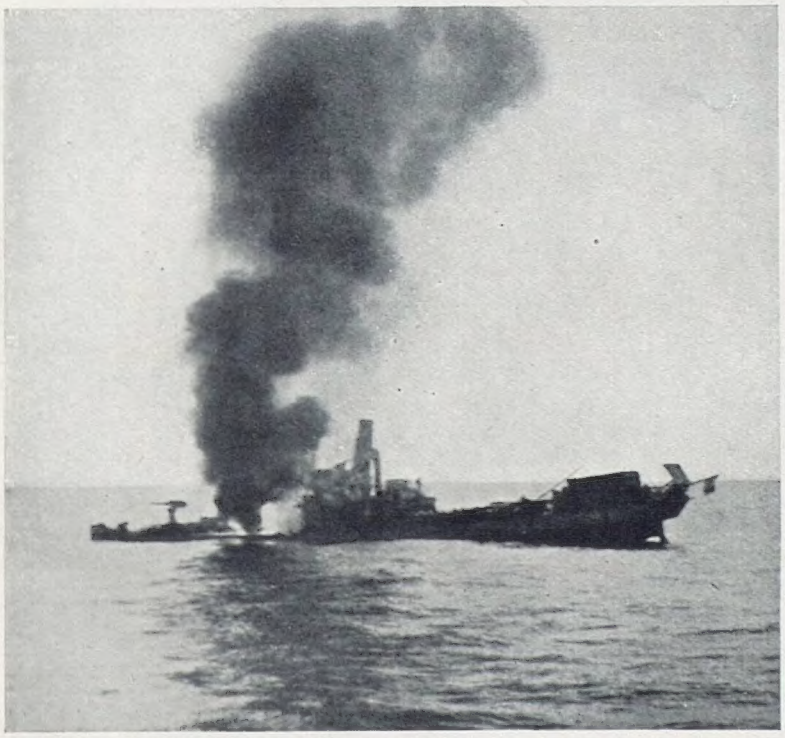
THE EXPLOITS OF H.M. SUBMARINE "PORPOISE"

Which Took Petrol to Malta and Which Operated Wit Great Success in the Mediterranean

When the submarine *Porpoise* returned to a British base recently, after fourteen months in the Mediterranean, she was flying a flag which had never before been seen at the mast of a submarine in Britain. It was a blue and red flag, on which were the letters "P.C.S." in white—"Porpoise Carrier Service." She was the first submarine to embark a cargo of petrol and mines, and to carry out a mine-laying operation during her passage At a time when enemy anti-submarine activity was most intensive, *Porpoise* made several supply trips to Malta laden with aviation spirit and munitions for the Fleet Air Arm and the R.A.F. In addition to her freighting activities, under one commander she sank a small transport (and probably sank another) and hit a medium-sized supply ship which had to be beached; under her present commander (Lieut. L. W. A. Bennington, D.S.O., D.S.C.) she sank two supply ships of medium size and a large tanker. Pictures taken during one of these engagements are reproduced here. *Porpoise* is a submarine of 1,520 tons, and she carries a complement of fifty-five. She was completed in 1937 as a mine-laying submarine: her speed on the surface is 15 knots

SOME OF THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF H.M.S. "PORPOISE," with their "Jolly Roger" and P.C.S. ("Porpoise Carrier Service") flags: Her commanding officer is standing between the two flags. This submarine took supplies of petrol to Malta at a time when the island was sore pressed



THE ARMED ITALIAN SUPPLY SHIP "GIACOMO," bound from Sicily to Tripoli with a cargo of benzine, ablaze and sinking. She had been hit amidships in a gun engagement with the submarine "Porpoise." The enemy vessel was flying the Italian naval ensign

ITALIAN NAVAL PERSONNEL, having abandoned the "Giacomo," about to be taken on board the "Porpoise." One of the men had made such a hurried departure from the sinking vessel that he was almost naked

THE CAPTAIN OF THE "PORPOISE" (Lieut. L. W. A. Bennington, D.S.O., D.S.C.) at the periscope of his submarine

A TASK WHICH HAD TO BE ABANDONED. When the crew of the "Giacomo" approached the submarine, only two had been taken on board when an aircraft, believed to be hostile, was sighted. The "Porpoise" had to abandon her humane project and dived immediately to escape a probable attack

A YEAR and a HALF of SIEGE

The Story of Leningrad, Northern Capital of Soviet Russia, Relieved by the Red Army on January 18

AT last, after a year and a half of being shut within its ring of defences, Leningrad has been relieved. On January 18, after seven days of intense conflict, the Red Armies, from without and within the city, broke through the German besieging army on the eastern flank to the south of Lake Ladoga. It was a great achievement, as the enemy was holding on with grim determination, fully realising that a land entry into Leningrad would mean the failure of their long effort to seize the city. The defending army, under General Govarov, pushed across the frozen Neva in face of the enemy, who were shelling the ice, which broke into dangerous splinters, and managed to drag heavy tanks across on pontoons to the other side. Meanwhile, another Soviet force was attacking the coastal positions of the Germans at Schlusselburg, on Lake Ladoga; and the Red Army outside, under General Meretzkov, were pounding their way to Sinyavino, some miles south-east of Schlusselburg. It was a great moment when the two Russian armies met.

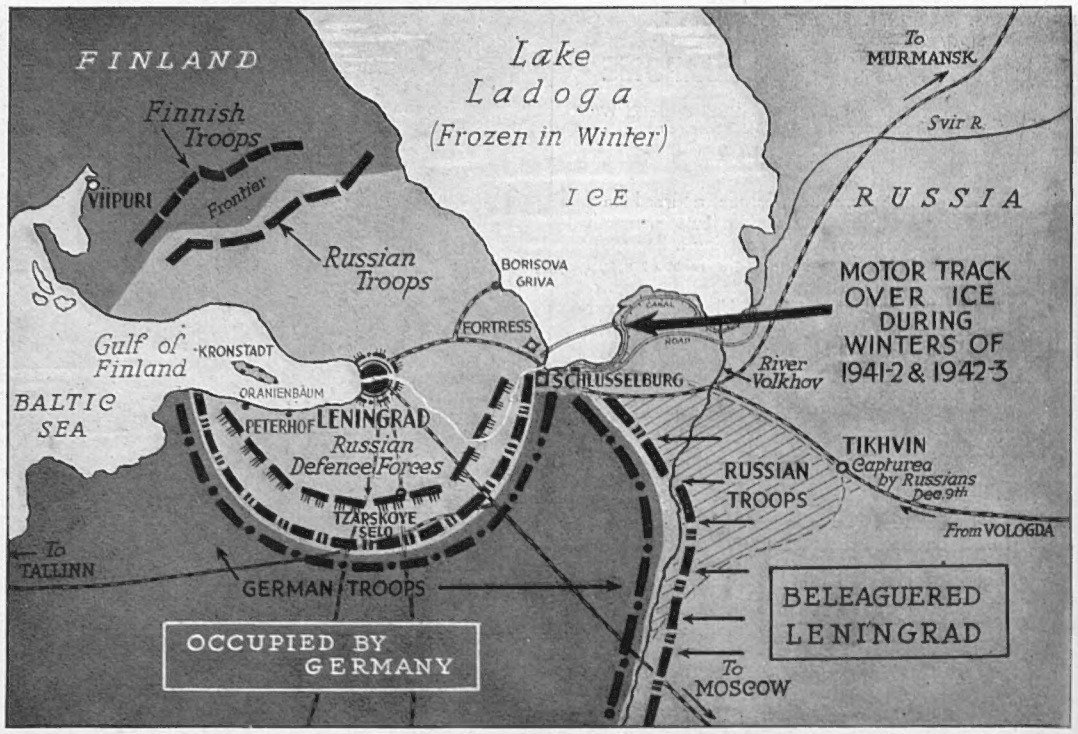
THE NEW SOVIET COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, General Ivan Koniev, who has taken over the command formerly held by Marshal Zhukov

At the moment, the entrance into the besieged city is but a small one, but the fighting is still going on. The narrow corridor held by the Germans up to the Lake is one of great strength for the defence—a district of forest and swamp, with only causeways by which to approach the higher dry ground held by the enemy. The Red Armies, however, are under the exhilaration of long-denied success, and they are pushing on.

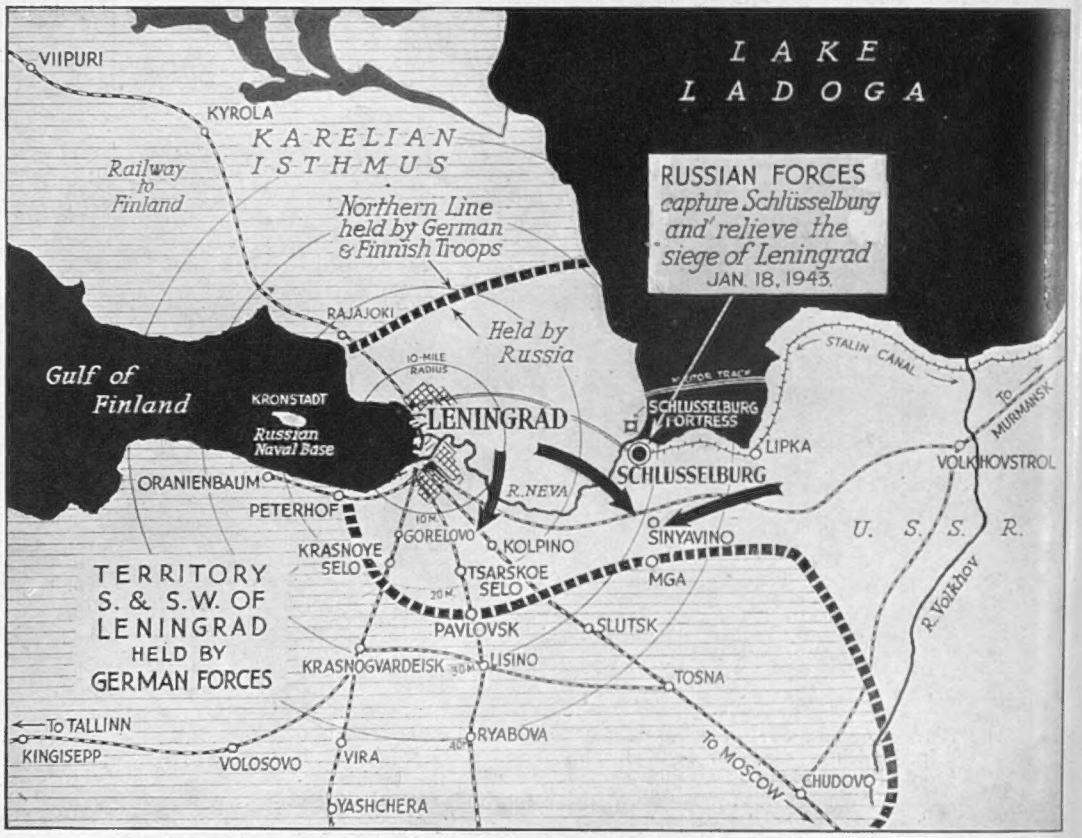
Leningrad has endured by far the longest siege of the war. Odessa stood bravely for a short time—about eight weeks; Sebastopol made an heroic defence for eight months; and Stalingrad has borne with outstanding courage the most terrific and persistent assault for five months; but no city has endured such long-drawn-out months of enemy attack, of attempted slow strangulation, as Leningrad.

The people of Leningrad responded whole-heartedly to the call to arms of Marshal Voroshilov when, at the moment of great danger in August 1941, he appealed to all the citizens to defend their beloved city. "Leningrad never has and never will be in the hands of the enemy."

DURING THE "STATIC" STAGE AT LENINGRAD: Engineers of the Red Army checking a field-telephone line installed in the trenches around the city. Their task was dangerous and difficult, as enemy snipers often lurked behind them as they worked



HOW THE CITY OF LENINGRAD WAS RINGED IN BY THE GERMANS ON THREE SIDES. This was the state of affairs for a year and a half, when the only way of communicating with the defenders, and reinforcing them, was over the ice of Lake Ladoga in the winter, and over the motor track constructed to the north of the Schlusselburg Fortress in the summer



HOW THE SIEGE WAS RAISED ON JANUARY 18. The relieving Red Army from the east captured the town of Schlusselburg and joined up with the defenders striking towards the south and south-east. With the capture of Sinyavino, Leningrad was relieved after many weary months of bitter conflict

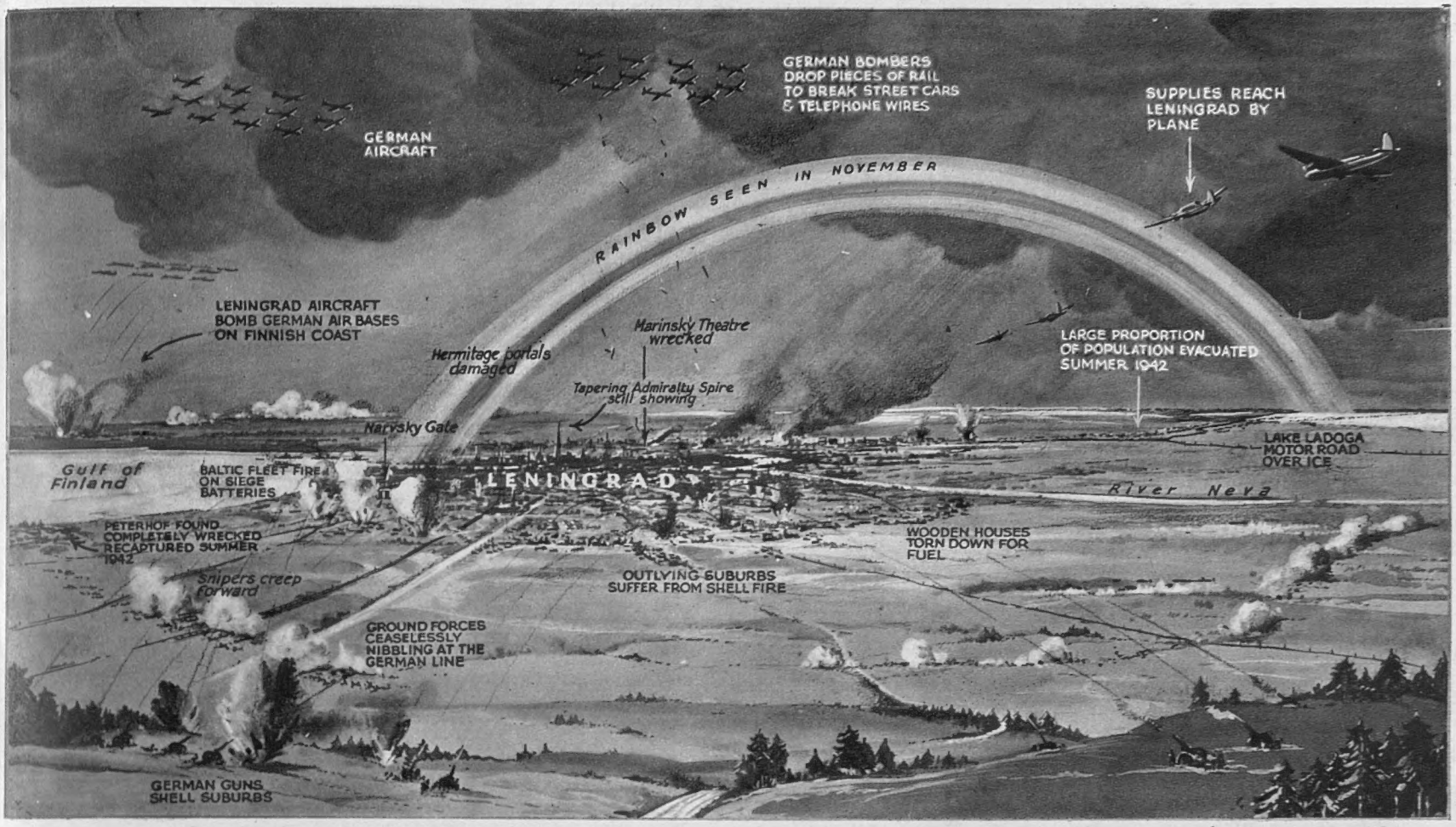
At that time, nothing seemed to be stemming the onward sweep of the Germans, and they fully expected the immediate fall of the city, which, to the amazement and anger of the High Command, continued to resist.

The main objective of the Nazis was to capture the great city, sweep round Lake Ladoga, and join up with the Finns, who had reached the River Svir, and so cut off the whole of northern Russia. It seemed almost within their grasp when they got as far east as Tikhvin, which they captured on November 10, 1941. This represented a great disaster for the Russians, making the supply of Leningrad even more difficult—but it also represented the high-water-mark of Nazi success. Within a month they were driven out, and back to the line of the River Volkhov. In spite, however of the fierceness of the Russian attack, and the severity of the winter, the Germans clung on to the eastern outskirts of the city, being reinforced at all critical moments through their command of the railways.

The sufferings of the people within the city during the first winter have not yet been fully told. Food was so scarce that, at one period, it was only 3 oz. a day. No-one could tend to the deep snow which lay everywhere; the streets were cluttered with broken glass and fallen masonry; the trams ceased to run and the water-supply failed. Yet the spirit of the people never faltered, and, though weakened by lack of food and rest, they toiled in the factories. The great secret of the defence was its determined policy of attack rather than the maintenance of a passive defence. Even the children were employed on special services.

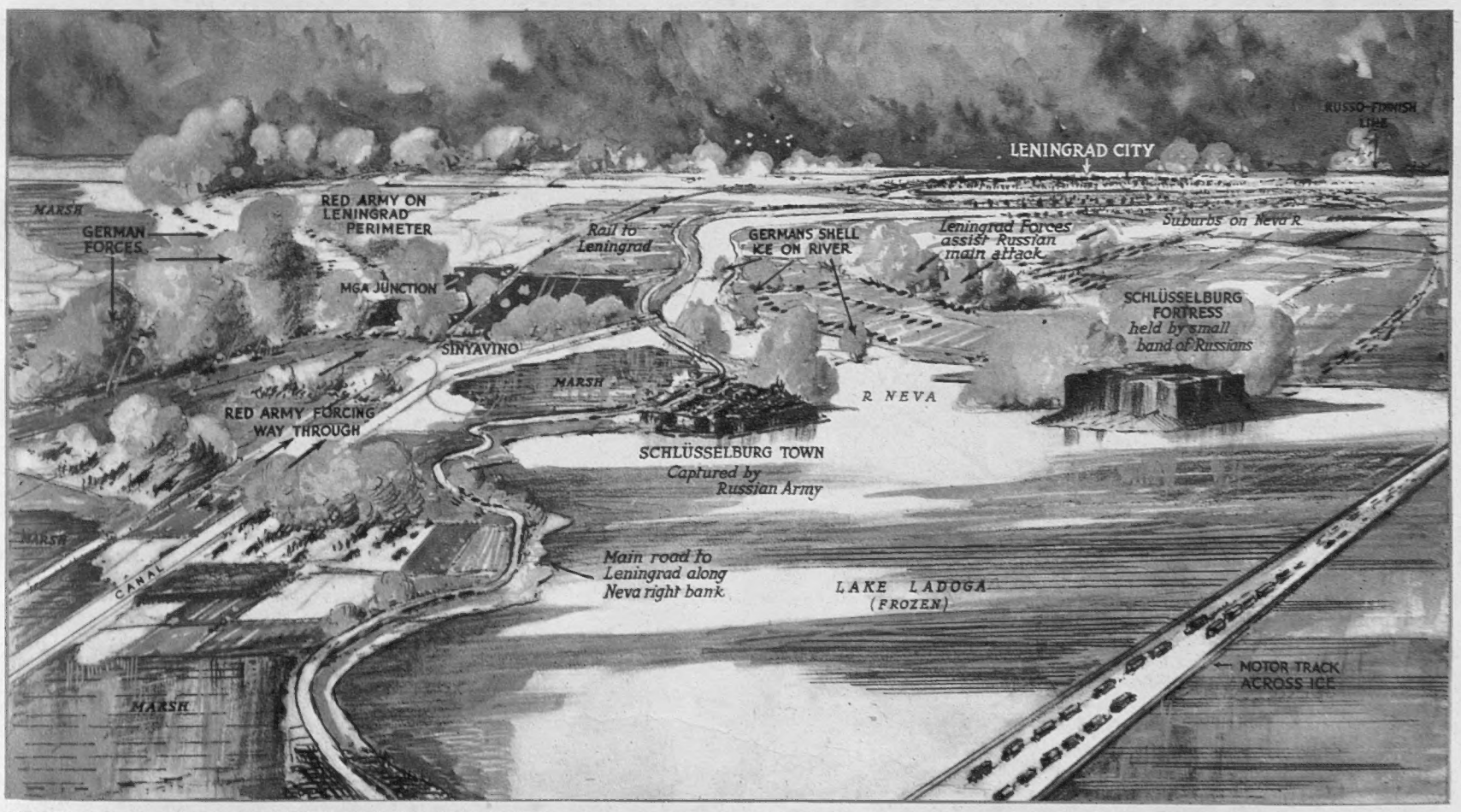
When spring came, after the long, bitter winter, new hope came to Leningrad, whose citizens revived as more food and supplies came in. They set to work to clean up the city, clearing away the snow, removing the litter, repainting the houses, and getting the trams running again. All the sick and wounded were evacuated, and only those allowed to remain who took an active part in the struggle. Throughout the winter, supplies had come across the ice of the frozen lake.

When the second winter of the siege began, Leningrad was much better-prepared, having greater stores of food, and with the defences strengthened. Houses had been made into strong-points like the factories of Stalingrad, and the whole defensive area, with its numerous canals and waterways, made serious obstacles for tanks. But none of this would avail if the *Luftwaffe* could obtain full mastery, which, contrary to expectation, they have never done. Though so near to the city, they have not been able to destroy the airfields, and the city, protected by the great guns of Kronstadt and the naval guns of the Baltic Fleet, can still use the air



AN EPITOME OF THE DEFENCE OF LENINGRAD: Some outstanding features of the eighteen months of siege—*Drawing by E. G. Lambert*

For seventy-four weeks the city of Peter the Great and Lenin, on the banks of the Neva, had withstood a siege which was endured with great and persistent courage by citizens hard pressed for food and all other supplies. The above diagrammatic drawing records some of the outstanding features of the siege. In the foreground is the perimeter of the defended area. Day by day this line had to be maintained and the enemy held in check by constant local counter-attacks. Snipers were constantly harassing the enemy forward lines. Although this kept the Nazis within bounds, shell-fire pounded the southern suburbs with scarcely a break, during which time the newly-built area around the Narvsky Gate suffered. When Peterhof was re-entered by the Russians in the summer of last year, it was found to be completely wrecked. In spite of this bombardment, market gardening was developed on every available piece of ground, even in the vicinity of the wrecked Marinsky Theatre. The tapering Admiralty spire, by an odd chance, is quite undamaged and still raises its elegant tip to the sky. The enemy actually dropped rail bars from planes in order to smash street cars and telephone cables! The Red Air Force managed, however, to maintain itself in being in spite of great difficulties, and would hearten the citizens by going out and bombing the German air bases on the Finnish coast. One feature of the architecture of the city has almost vanished—the wooden houses having been broken up for fuel during the coldest months of the winter. In November a rainbow of perfect formation was seen over the city, and its promise of help brought relief to the hearts of the sorely-tried citizens



THE METHOD BY WHICH THE RELIEF CORRIDOR WAS OPENED and is now being maintained through the towns of Schlusselburg and Sinyavino—*Drawing by Percy Home*

The break-through of the German encircling lines round Leningrad's defence zone occurred just south of Lake Ladoga at two points totalling about 8 miles in width. Lipska, seen in the foreground of the above drawing, was one of the first points taken: it was outflanked and attacked from the rear by the Volkhof, or outside, force. The inside, or Leningrad, force was attacking at the same time: it had to make its way across the Neva, the ice of which was shelled by German gunners in order to make a passage difficult. Fiercely contested actions took place around Sinyavino, in the midst of the Workers' Settlements area. Schlusselburg town was captured, after fighting had taken place alongside the twin canals of Staro Ladozhsky and Novo Ladozhsky. The Fortress on Orekhov Island, originally built by trading merchants from Novgorod in 1328 to defend traffic on the Neva, assisted with its guns from across the ice. The Fortress itself had never surrendered, although the neighbouring town was in German hands. After a number of strong-points had been overcome, the two Russian forces succeeded in joining hands and the day was won

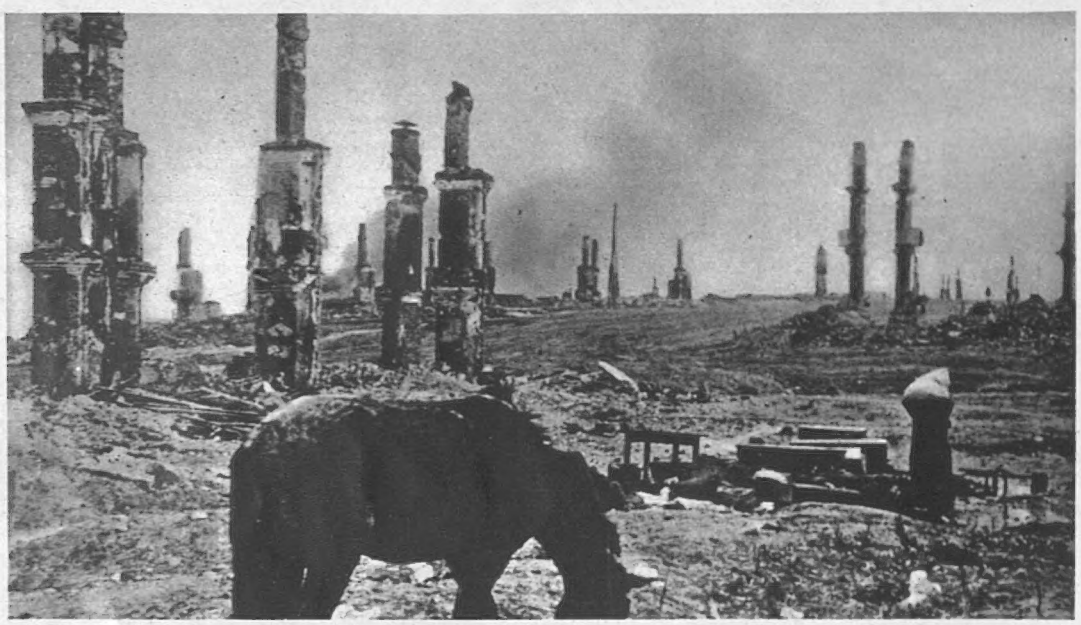
During November and December, the weather conditions brought about a general lull—the mud was appalling, so thick, soft and watery that horses sank into it and were drowned. When, with the New Year, the ground hardened under the frost, the Red Army began its great attack, which resulted in the defeat of the Germans and their forced retirement from the shores of the Lake, where they had held the town of Schlusselburg. The fort of Schlusselburg was never captured by them. Manned by naval men from the Baltic Fleet, it was supplied by motor-boats creeping up under cover of night.

The enemy is not yet driven from Leningrad. It may take still greater efforts unless Von Leeb is obliged to withdraw owing to pressure farther south. The siege is said to have cost the Germans and Finns some 250,000 in dead alone. It is not yet definitely known what price in human lives the defenders had to pay, but though, doubtless, it was a very heavy one, it was one which all were willing to give to save their city from the Germans.

b

STALINGRAD REJOICES in the GERMAN DEFEAT

RUSSIAN GUARDS EXAMINING A BIG NAZI TRANSPORT PLANE brought down by a Soviet fighter to the north-west of Stalingrad. In all probability, this was one of the fleet of transports used by the Germans to revictual their trapped Sixth Army, now wiped out. Hundreds of these big craft were used—to bring in food, supplies, ammunition, etc.—and scores of them were shot down by the Red fighter-planes and anti-aircraft batteries



A RUSSIAN POMPEII : A scene of desolation at Stalingrad, where whole sections of the city were literally torn apart by the violence of the German gunners and the Luftwaffe. It is to areas like these that the former inhabitants are now returning, salvaging what they can of their possessions (like the woman in the above picture), and valiantly setting out on the task of starting life all over again

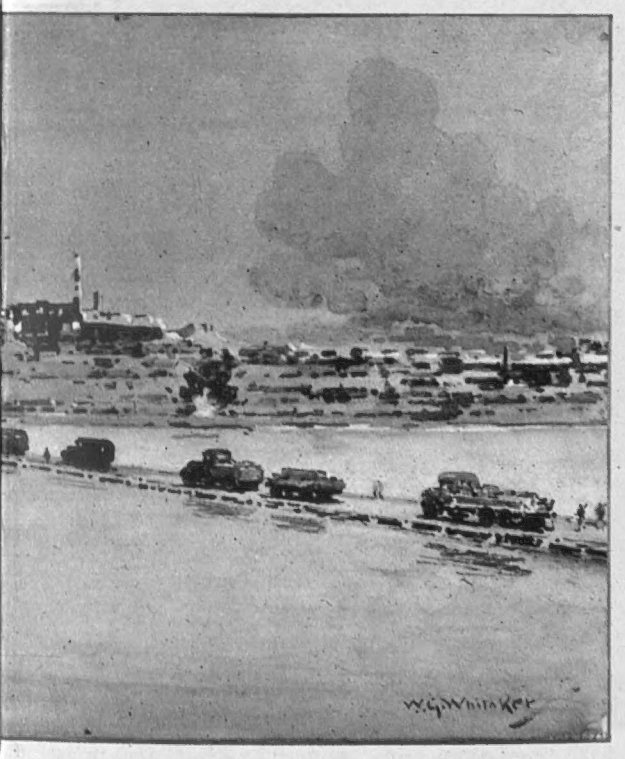
A MONSTER YPRES—THE CITY OF STALINGRAD TO-DAY, Tough survivors

For nearly six months the city of Stalingrad figured in the world's headlines. In those months the Steel City withstood assaults such as the world had never seen before. The Nazis sent scores of their best divisions, thousands of tanks and thousands of planes to batter down the buildings and the soldiers who had formed themselves into an impregnable wall in the path of the invader. Bomb-shattered buildings were fought for with unyielding ferocity, the Germans paying in fantastic casualties for gains of single houses. Bombed from the air, pounded by the heaviest siege guns, living in the ruins of their streets, the citizens endured an ordeal that is without equal in history. To-day, those who left Stalingrad are streaming back to their ruined homes ; life is returning to the Dead City ; the ruins are being cleared up. The German Sixth Army, once over 200,000 strong, has been eaten away by the Soviet forces until now nothing remains of it. Stalingrad—torn and battered and bombed—is coming to life once again. And one day—soon—it will again be a great arsenal for Soviet arms !

STALINGRAD RESUMES ITS FORMER LIFE IN PARTS OF THE CITY. "Mother Volga" is here more than a mile broad : This is where most of the Stalingrad moments. This is the nicest walk of all in the vicinity of the battered city, according to war correspondents on the spot. Here the war-weary survivors munitions and food into the city over the new-made ice-roads. These activities have continued, even while the Russian long-range batteries posted on the doomed battalions of the German Sixth Army which—to-day—no longer exists as such—*Drawing by*

FREED FROM THE MENACE OF THE GERMANS. The main streets have been cleared of debris, the craters filled in and dangerously tottering buildings demolished. of Rodimtzev's Siberian Guards stroll through the ruins arm-in-arm with girl stretcher-bearers—*Drawing by W. G. Whitaker*

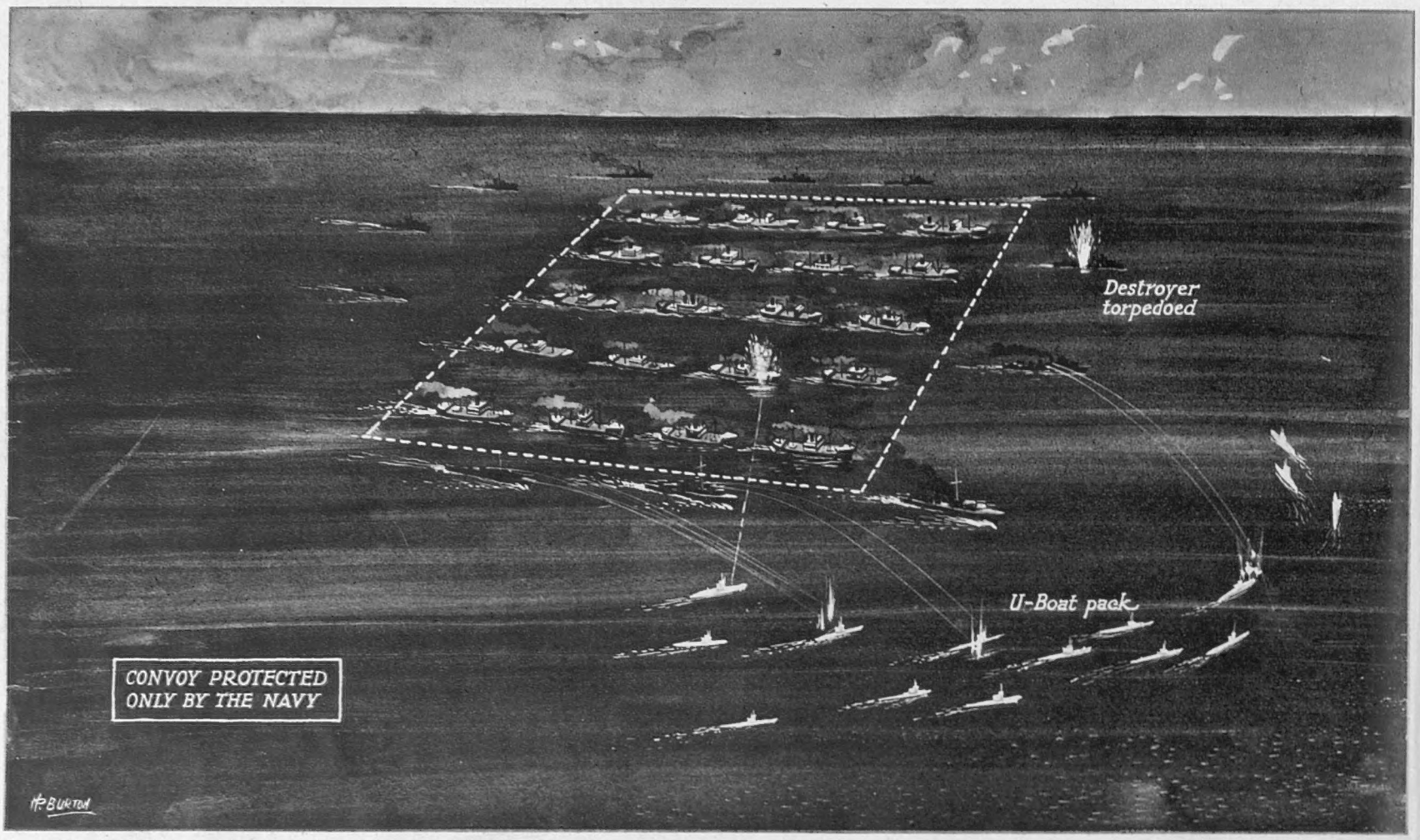
RUSSIAN SAPPERS SEARCHING FOR ENEMY MINES in a sector of the Stalingrad front. They are using special equipment for this task, similar to that used by our own men in Libya and Tripolitania



citizens now go to "sun" themselves in their few free of Stalingrad may watch a steady flow of lorries bringing eastern shore were pounding away at the trapped and

W. G. Whitaker

HOW SOME OF THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY MANAGED TO EXIST throughout the incessant bombardments. This poor old woman had dug herself into a cellar, when a Nazi "mopping-up" party lifted the lid and discovered her hiding-place. Many of the civilian population preferred this method of living in caves or dug-outs or cellars to surrender to forced labour for the hated invader



1. AN ATLANTIC CONVOY WITHOUT AIR ASSISTANCE, PROTECTED ONLY BY THE ROYAL NAVY. In this case the "wolf pack" of U-boats has only surface vessels—destroyers and corvettes of the convoy escort—to contend with. With their high surface speed, and without the fear of being forced down below by aircraft, the submarines can close in ahead of the convoy preparatory to attacking it after dark. This manœuvre could be repeated over a period of days

THE URGENT U-BOAT PROBLEM

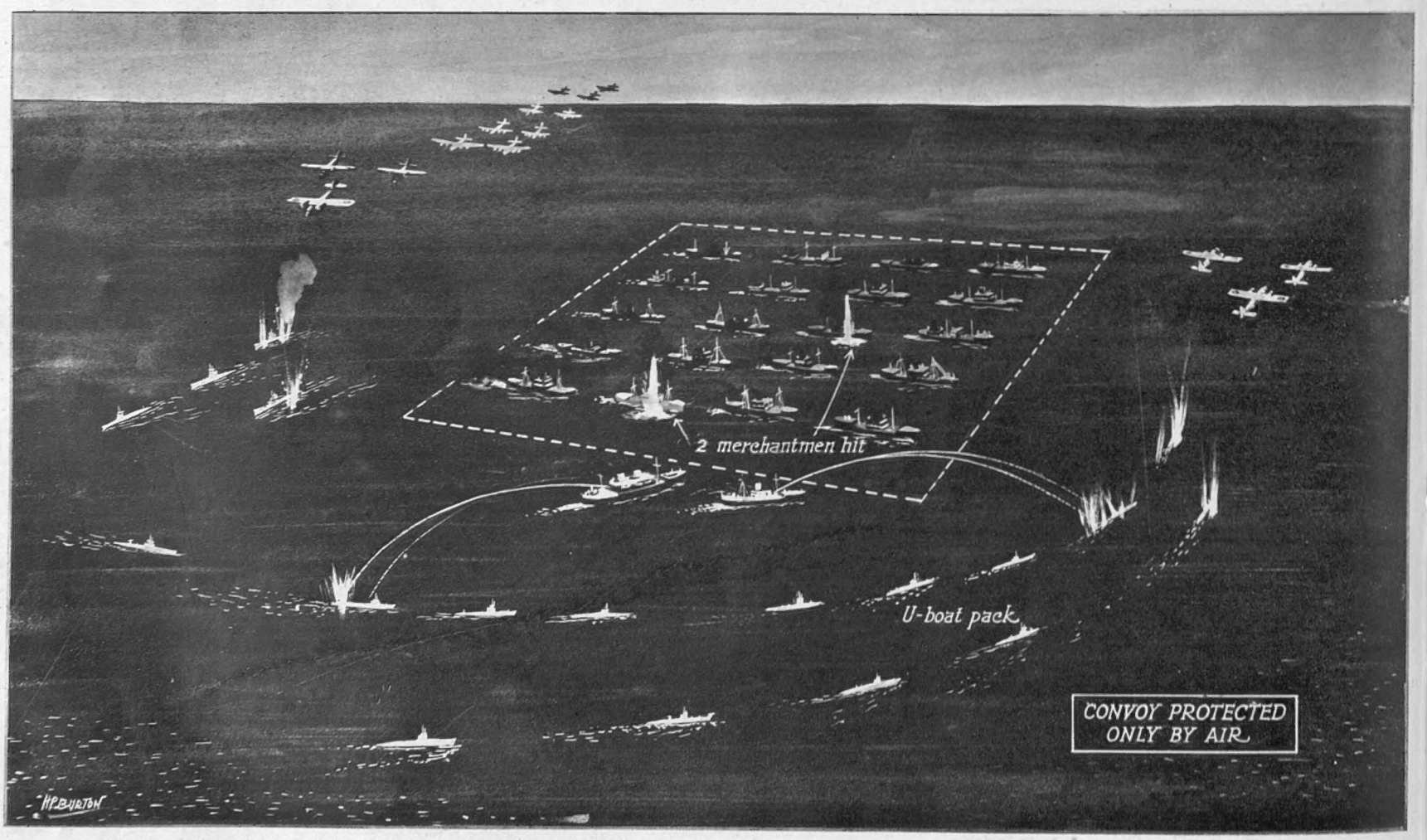
As Seen from the Naval Side and from the Air Side—and from the Two Sides Combined

Three Special Sphere *Diagrams*

THE problem of the U-boats is one which is now engaging the energies both of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force: it is a problem on which surface escort vessels and aircraft are both concentrating vigorously! Recently two experts have been giving expression to ideas on the subject; these experts are Captain Russell Grenfell, R.N., speaking as a naval man, and Mr. Peter Masefield, speaking as an exponent of Air Power.

Both are, of course, agreed as to the gravity of the enemy's pressure against Allied convoys, with its consequent loss of ships and valuable cargoes. The several virtues of the Air arm and of the Naval arm as weapons of defence were emphasised according to the predilections of the writer.

There was agreement on certain points, but a wide divergence on others. The most notable



2. A CONVOY WITHOUT NAVAL ASSISTANCE, PROTECTED ONLY BY AIRCRAFT. In this case the aircraft are all shore-based heavy bombers or flying-boats, which have flown many hundreds of miles out from land. They can attack the submarines, as soon as they surface, with depth-charges and cannon fire: but—they cannot operate in really bad weather conditions; they can patrol over the convoy only for a certain length of time, thus necessitating a constant stream of squadrons on escort duty; and they must leave uncovered a 600-mile gap in mid-Atlantic which they cannot reach. The chances are that the convoy would fare worse under these conditions than if it were escorted by the Navy alone

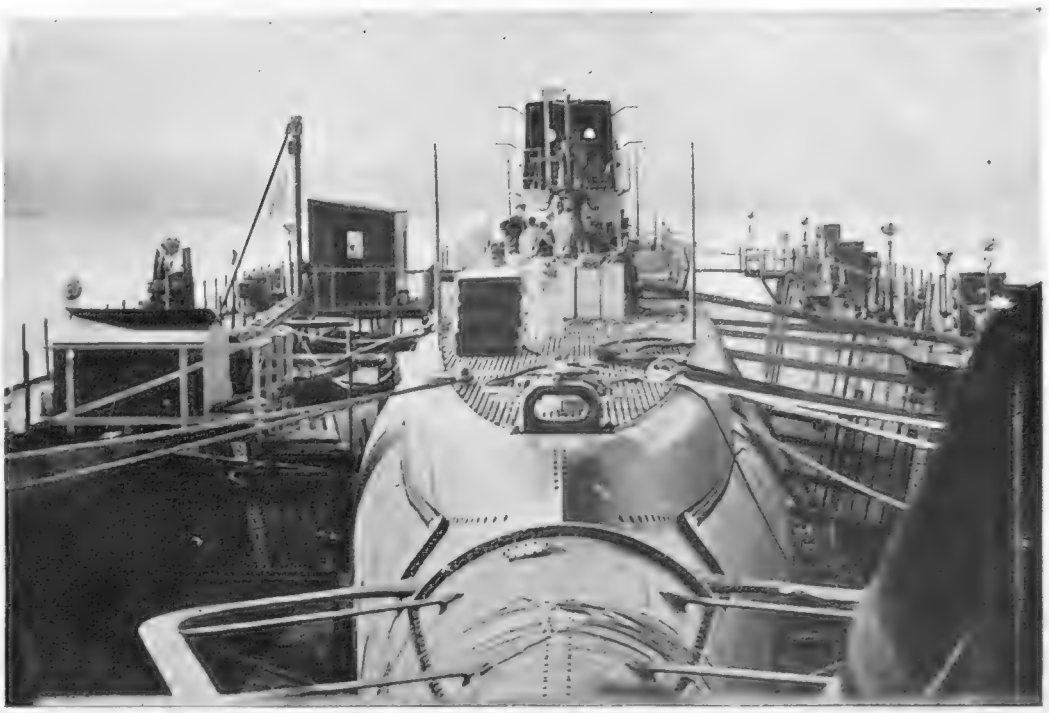
cleavage is on the question of the long-term policy of bombing the centres of submarine construction, as against the policy of providing all possible immediate defence to the moving convoy.

Mr. Masefield gives first place to the work of Bomber Command—not a single aircraft should be diverted from the task of knocking out production bases; whereas Captain Russell Grenfell, R.N., maintains that, under present conditions, the expenditure on the bombing of German production plants is an injudicious and extravagant diversion of strength.

On the question of immediate protection of convoys the authors are more precise. Mr. Masefield feels that "emphasis is passing from sea protection to air protection," and maintains that aircraft should take the first place. There is need for more small auxiliary aircraft carriers. There is a gap of 600 miles, says Mr. Masefield, which cannot be covered by aircraft at the present moment. This is where the carrier would function beneficially, in what is a chief danger spot for the convoys. Long-range, land-based bombers of Coastal Command should be provided in requisite numbers together with naval anti-submarine aircraft to operate at short range.

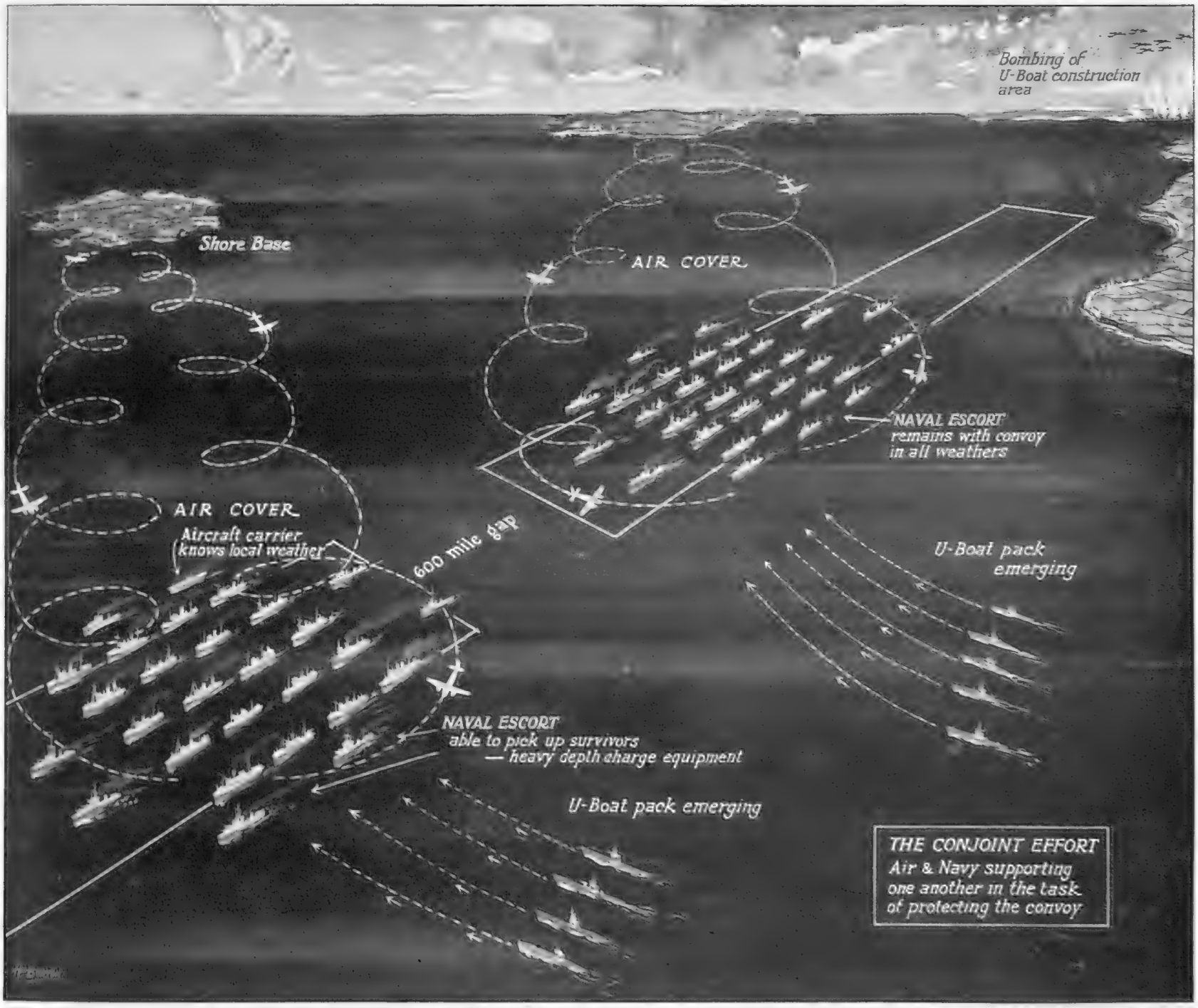
The naval expert marshals some effective points. He points out that naval escort vessels remain with the convoy in all weathers; their depth-charge equipment is the more effective, and the escort is capable of rescue work to a degree with which the Air arm cannot compete. He stresses the needs of immediate protection to the convoy, and therefore emphasises the virtue of carrier-borne aircraft, as against shore-borne aircraft perhaps stationed 500 miles away. The carrier knows the possibilities of the local weather and can take advantage of it immediately.

Both writers appear to agree on the vital point that U-boats are being built faster than they are being destroyed. Captain Grenfell believes in "the ancient principle of convoy and escort." In this connection, another critic has pointed out that when the convoy system was put into general use in 1917-18, its great success was aided in large measure by the fact that the position of convoys were not known. But, to-day, wireless and under-sea signals, together with aircraft observation, help the enemy to find the convoy—and then the U-pack chase begins.



AN IDEA FROM AMERICA: A submarine encased in a floating dock

This vessel is the *Peto*: it is one of the seventy-three submarines of the Gato class, each of which will be of 1,525 tons and of a speed of 21 knots (on the surface). The *Peto* was laid down in July 1941: it is here seen—encased in a floating dock—on its way down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, where the underwater craft will then be fitted out. The submarine has been constructed at a cost of 7,500,000 dollars. This picture was taken from the pilot-house window of the towboat



3. **A CONVOY, WITH NAVAL AND AIR ASSISTANCE WORKING TOGETHER.** This is the ideal method of convoy, provided that surface escort vessels and aircraft can be used in sufficient numbers. The naval vessels, of course, remain with the convoy under all conditions of weather: if an aircraft-carrier be included, the local weather ahead can be investigated by aircraft flown from its deck, and the shore-based heavy bombers and flying-boats can be summoned at will. Together, ships and planes can drive off most attacks by the U-boat packs; and the surface escort vessels can also pick up the survivors of any merchantmen who fall by the way. The aircraft, incidentally, can come from one, or more, shore bases as the convoy proceeds on its course. In mid-Atlantic, there is a 600-mile gap which usually has to be covered by the naval escorts alone, as it is too far out for even long-range aircraft to reach, and patrol, in comfort

The TANK MEN of the EIGHTH ARMY

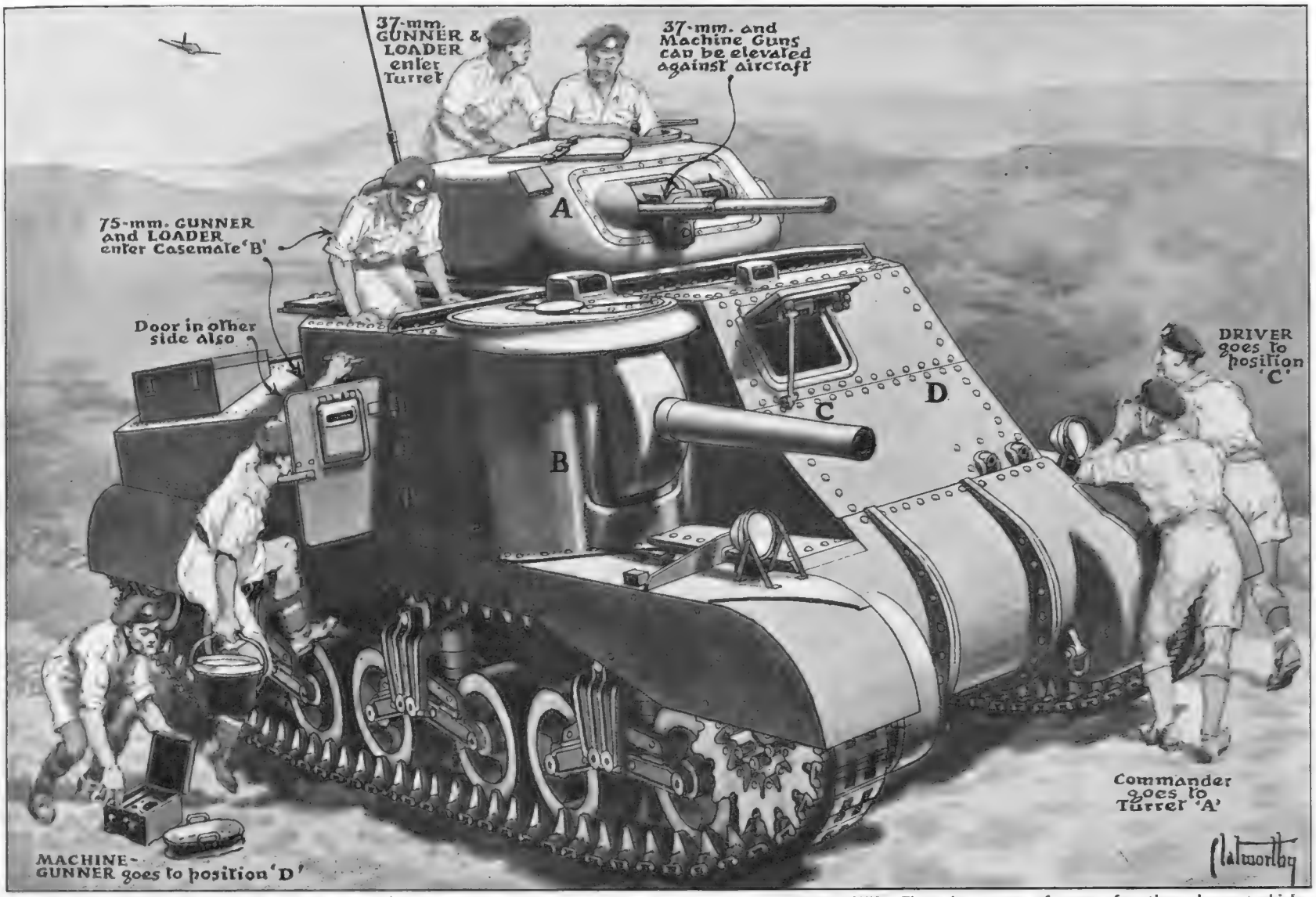
And the Conditions Under Which They Live During the Desert Fighting in Tripolitania

—Special Sphere Drawings

The tank crews of the Eighth Army, although handling one of the deadliest weapons of war, have throughout the campaign lived and worked together in the kindly, easy-going atmosphere of a happy family. Such is the impression conveyed by the war correspondents who have lived beside the Tank Corps units in the Desert. When the day's work is done, and the evening lull descends over the desert (this "laager" lull has been a feature of tank fighting at certain periods), the crew have been able to stretch their limbs outside the tank, and talk has become intimate under the stars. The men always seem anxious to talk about their home towns; but with a modesty which is so characteristically British, they never discuss their own exploits. They are always ready, however, to tell what a friend has done. The work of the tank crews is hard; they may not have to perform the "foot-slogging" feats of the infantryman, but after every journey there is maintenance on the tank, oiling, greasing, refilling with petrol and water. And, although the inside of the tank is no longer quite the hell of the earliest days, it is still exceedingly noisy. In the Western Desert, the heat, dust, flies and difficulty of getting water added enormously to every difficulty.

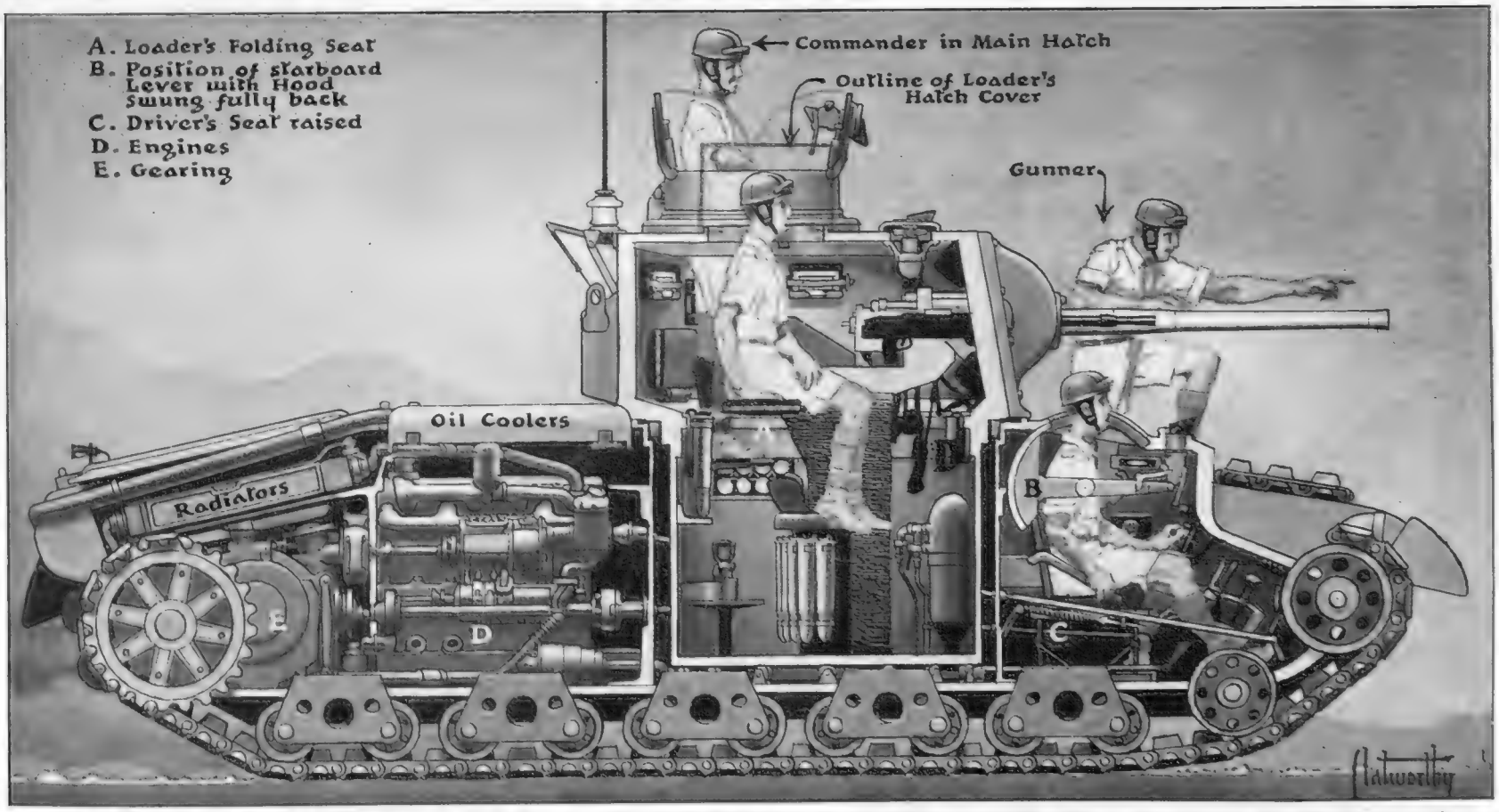
The devotion of tank crews under trying conditions, quite apart from enemy action, has not yet received full recognition. The astonishing love of a crew for their machine is, in fact, as great as that of the old cavalryman for his horse.

A TANK CREW IN THE DESERT AFTER THE FIGHTING OF THE DAY IS OVER: Under the stars, the crew clamber out to stretch their limbs and to prepare for the night's rest on the desert sands. This is the moment when, their other tasks completed, the tough, hard-bitten crews sit and chat about their homes back in England and about life before—and after—the war—*Drawing by Edward Osmond*



AN INTERRUPTED BREAKFAST: THE CREW OF A GENERAL GRANT HURRY TO GET ABOARD THEIR TANK. There is a crew of seven for these larger vehicles. There is a door on each side of the tank, and there are also hatch entrances for the two gun turrets—*Drawing by S. W. Clatworthy (Artist's copyright in the U.S.A.)*

The modern tank has altered internally just as it has changed externally. The driver has a well-arranged seat in the front of the tank. Until the time arrives, he keeps his armoured cowl open and has a good view of the country in front. After the cowl is closed, he can see immediately in front of him through a low periscope which reflects into a mirror on his dashboard. He steers the tank by levers, one in each hand. The various members of the crew of a modern tank cannot see each other and they communicate by headphones. The commander is in the turret, and his spoken instructions can be heard clearly by the driver. All but the smallest tanks, and even some of these, are equipped with wireless for communication with each other and with headquarters. The wireless operator usually "doubles" the part of loading the guns. Many of the fittings of the latest tanks are secret, but it can be said that electrically-moved turrets are now replacing the hand-operated type, although even these were so well balanced that a slight touch was all that was necessary to swing them round.



THE TANK CREW OF A MATILDA TAKE THEIR PLACES FOR THE DAY'S WORK OF TRACKING DOWN ROMMEL: The positions occupied by the crew are shown: the gunner, who is giving final directions, will take his place alongside the loader in a central position behind the gun. There are no living quarters in the rear: all the space is occupied by engines and machinery—*Drawing by S. W. Clatworthy (Artist's copyright in the U.S.A.)*

The normal tank crew consists of three or four men—commander, one or two gunners, driver and the wireless operator, who also loads the heavy gun. The driver is now usually in a separate compartment. Once the tank has been closed down for action, only the commander sees much of what happens. The gunner sits in the turret which, if it is hand-operated, he can swing round with a mere touch of his left hand. He is generally seated to the left of his guns, which he fires by a trigger with his right hand. Just behind him is the wireless set. The wireless operator is on his left in a convenient position to feed the 2-pounder gun with shells. The positions, of course, may vary with different types of tanks, but this is a typical arrangement. All these men are, to a degree, specialists, but they are so trained that if one falls out another can take his place. The commander must be a master of driving, gunnery and wireless. It is not easy for the men to change places in action, but it can be done with a squeeze. It has been possible to reduce the number of the crew without loss of fire power by making the guns able to fire in a complete circle of 360 degrees. In the first tanks, the guns could only bear on targets on their own side of the tank, so that more guns were required.

AN UNUSUAL SIGHT DURING THE PRESENT WAR: A FOUR-MASTED BARQUE (OF 2,142 TONS, BUILT OF STEEL) PUTS INTO HARBOUR AT TABLE BAY IN a vessel from a forgotten generation." The vessel obviously could not sail in Convoy, and coul

THE SAILING-SHIP IN WARTIME

The Vessels which Have Disappeared From the Normal Ocean Trade Routes

The sailing-vessels which, before the war (but in diminishing numbers), graced our seas have a great value to-day—when every ship can play its part in the Allied war effort. But, owing to obvious difficulties, they would fall an easy prey to the U-boats were it not for one thing: their course is often dictated by the trade winds into waters which the submarines, in their search for modern steamships, do not frequent.

A story in a London newspaper recently described the scene above, and its attendant

On left—**A SAILING-VESSEL WHICH WAS A "MYSTERY SHIP" OF THE LAST WAR:** This picture was taken in the year 1934. It shows the *Mary B. Mitchell* off the Irish coast bound for Arkley from Widnes. During the 1914-18 war, from 1917 onwards, she was a "Q" ship operating from Falmouth, and she was invariably successful in actions with enemy submarines. On June 30, 1917, she encountered three German submarines in the Bay of Biscay and sank two of them in six hours. On August 3, 1917, she encountered a German submarine off Start Point, and after the usual "panic party" ruse the submarine finally disappeared, severely damaged. The sailing-ship was known as the "M.B.M.", and she used French and Russian colours as well as British

IN SOUTH AFRICA; As a correspondent in Cape Town put it—"The most dramatic sight I have ever seen was when a full-rigged windjammer sailed into the Bay like ul only escape the U-boats by keeping to unfrequented ocean tracks—*Drawing by Montague Dawson*

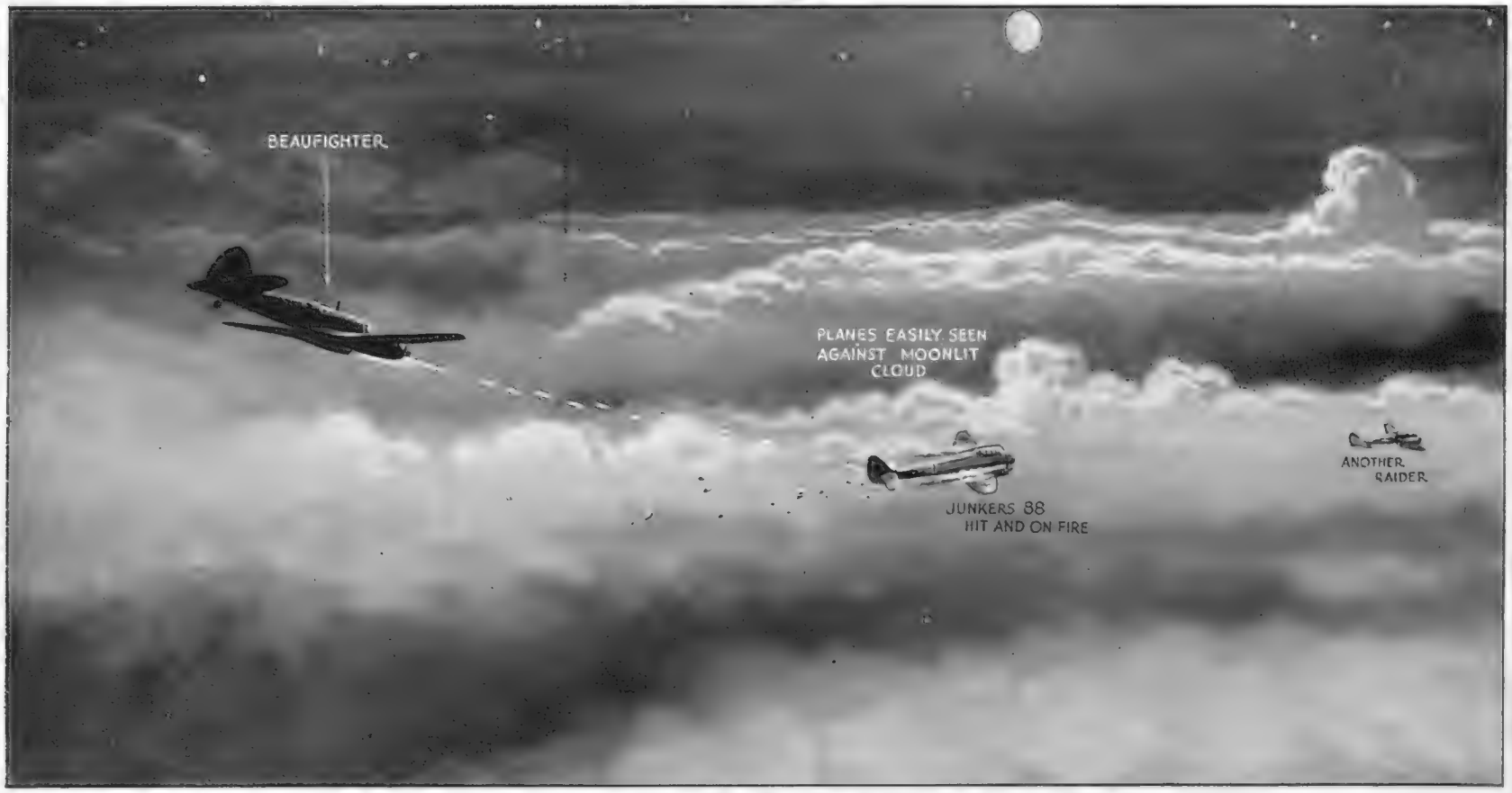
circumstances, in the following terms: "Since the war, Table Bay has grown accustomed to the sight of huge convoys, but the most dramatic sight I have ever seen was when a full-rigged windjammer sailed into the Bay like a vessel from a forgotten generation.

"Three large sailing-vessels were recently moored together in the bay, including an American schooner from San Francisco with a cargo of timber. She had a scratch crew who would have horrified the hoary sailormen who first took the old vessel out of a British yard fifty years ago. She had been given two extra masts and Diesel engines.

"I had known that ship on the other side of the Atlantic when she was one of the hundreds of vessels parked in 'Rum Row,' where the bootleggers could ply their trade beyond the Prohibition limit. At the end of Prohibition she was turned into a floating casino, and later a Hollywood property.

"She was subsequently discarded as a useless hulk, but now she has taken her place among the vessels of the Allied merchant fleet. American crews in these sailing-ships get £60 a month each, plus bonus. These vessels have a fair chance of a voyage safe from U-boats in the expanse of the South Atlantic."

On right—**THE LAST BRITISH SAILING-SHIP BEFORE THE WAR:** Another picture taken in the year 1934, this shows the *Elizabetta* of Liverpool, which was then the only sailing-ship owned in Great Britain to be sailing in deep water. The picture was taken under tropical skies in the vicinity of Mombasa



HOW MOONLIT CLOUDS HELP THE NIGHT FIGHTER: The "ideal conditions" for this type of combat, whereby Wing Commander Wight-Boycott was enabled to bring down four Nazi bombers in one night—*Drawing by Roland Davies*

When the Germans attacked London by night on Sunday, January 17, a number of their bombers were shot down by British night fighters. The most successful of these was Wing Commander C. M. Wight-Boycott, leader of a Beaufighter Squadron and a former official of Scotland Yard, who brought down no fewer than four. "It was a grand night for night fighting," he said later, "for the moon and cloud made the conditions almost ideal." He made three sorties during the night, during the course of which he was in the air for six hours. His first "bag" was during the first patrol; during his second, Wing Commander Wight-Boycott encountered nothing; but during the third patrol (which began shortly before 4 a.m.) he shot down the remaining three—a Dornier 217 "jinking violently"; another Dornier 217 which exploded amidships; and a Ju. 88 which caught fire in both engines. This aircraft blazed so fiercely that it lit up the whole sky, so that its black crosses were clearly visible to the night fighter. By bringing down four raiders in one night Wing Commander Wight-Boycott set up a new night-fighter record for the R.A.F.

THE NIGHT FIGHTER

The Men and Their Machines

Described by LAWRENCE SCOTT

WHEN the noise of gunfire dies down during a "blitz," the night air often seems full of the heavy, reverberating roar of bombers' engines. "The sky must be full of them," thinks the man in the street. "Can't imagine why they don't get more down." Then there may be heard the sharp rattle of machine-guns (like a boy running a stick over an iron fence), or the slower "plop-plop" of cannon-fire, and the man in the street is comforted to realise that the raiders are not the only inhabitants of the upper air. Our night fighters have indeed grown to be one of our most potent defenders against the *Luftwaffe*. While bags of four raiders in a night, such as that made by one pilot in a recent London raid, are naturally rare, the average is high, and the grand total is very impressive. The County of Middlesex Squadron alone had got its score of night victories up to about seventy last autumn, and must be well ahead by now.

Night fighting needs a highly specialised technique, and it naturally took us some time to learn the tricks of the trade. It needs a special temperament, too—a good day-fighter pilot may be quite unsuited for night work, and, though a bomber is, relatively speaking, easy prey, night fighting is risky work, not only in training, but also in actual "ops."

When we commenced night fighting, in the winter of 1940, we had to rely mainly on ordinary day fighters—the Spitfire and Hurricane. Though these are still used, the single-engine machine is not

WING COMMANDER C. M. WIGHT-BOYCOTT, who shot down four German raiders in one night over London

BRITISH NIGHT FIGHTERS OVER CALCUTTA: Another big bag for a night pilot, who shot down three Jap raiders in four minutes! One of the enemy had his navigation lights on in an attempt to fool the British intercepting aircraft—a ruse which failed badly!—*Drawing by Roland Davies*

If Wing Commander Wight-Boycott can claim four enemy aircraft destroyed in one night, Flight-Sergeant Arthur Maurice Owens Pring can claim three enemy aircraft destroyed in four minutes—probably another R.A.F. record! The Flight-Sergeant is stationed in Calcutta: he has already been credited with three bombers destroyed and two seriously damaged over Malta. On the night of Friday, January 15, he went up to attack Jap raiders over the city of Calcutta. "The first plane I saw had navigation lights on, but I wasn't fooled," said the pilot. "We had been 'scrambled' out of bed for this show, and I knew the plane was not one of ours, so I shot him to the ground. Number Two burst into flames. About 200 yards ahead a third Jap plane was trying desperately to get away, but I got him in my sights and he went into the ground shooting flames like an oil-gusher. That was the quickest four minutes I've ever had." Somewhat naturally, after this great exploit Flight-Sergeant Pring is to-day the hero of Calcutta, and mobbed wherever he appears!

ideal for night work—the pilot sits behind 10 ft. or so of engine, and has to peer through the dazzling propeller-disc, as well as the glare of the exhausts Two-engined machines are much better—the pilot has a much clearer view, with the engines well out of his way in the wings; there is usually at least one other airman aboard to assist in spotting, and the larger machine can carry more ammunition, can stay up longer, and is easier to land and take-off in the dark.

The Bristol Blenheim and the Douglas Havoc were two of the earliest twin-engine fighters. The early Blenheim could do about 295 m.p.h., and mounted four machine-guns firing forward. It was not really a very adequate match for the medium German bombers, which were only a few miles an hour slower. The Havoc was a special version of the Boston bomber, and is still in service as a night "intruder," for which its endurance of 1,200 miles makes it very suitable. It packed a powerful armament in its nose, now probably heavier still.

But it was not until the Blenheim was given bigger engines and more guns and re-christened the Beaufighter that we really began to get the whip-hand in night-fighting. The latest Beaufighter is the night-bomber's nightmare. Its two Merlin engines give it a speed of 330 m.p.h. Its armament is usually four cannon in the nose, and six machine-guns in the wings. These are the machines used by the celebrated night-fighter squadron commanded by Wing Commander Max Aitken, D.S.O., D.F.C., who has himself downed at least four night bombers. Firing all guns, it has the stupendous rate of fire of 9,000 rounds (cannon plus ·303) a minute, equal to about 765 lb. a minute. The cannon being in the nose, the observer (who also acts as navigator) can reload them in flight. The old bugbear of the single-engine fighter—ammunition running out in the middle of a patrol—is thus avoided.

The Westland Whirlwind is also used as an intruder. Though a twin-engine machine, it is only a single-seater, but its four cannon guns give it a fire rate of 2,400 rounds a minute, equal to about 600 lb. a minute.

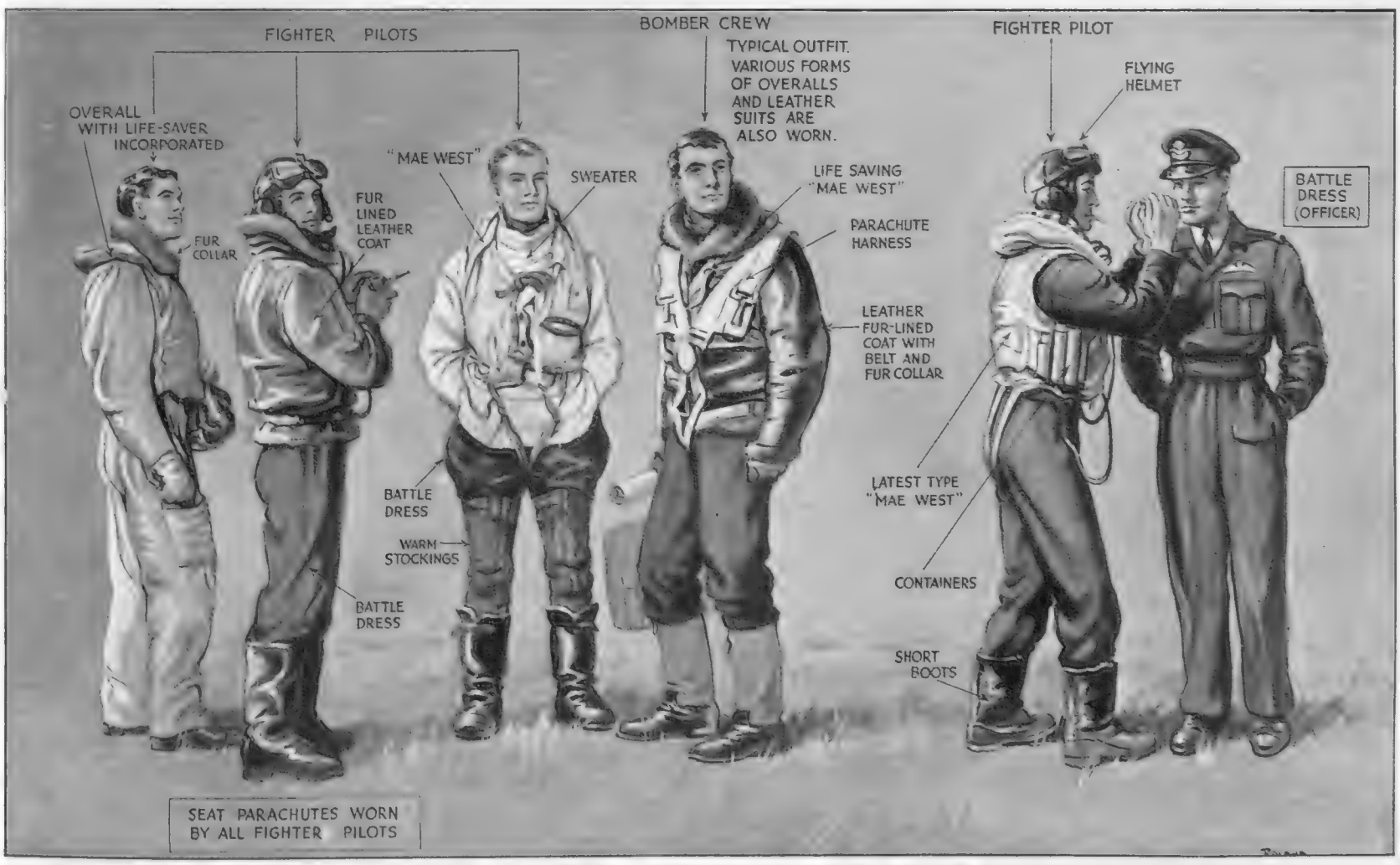
Most night actions are fought at close quarters, the pilot's ideal being a short range and a longish burst—once you lose contact in the dark, you may never regain it. Therefore, use your superior speed to get the bomber filling your sights, and your heavy armament to make sure of wrecking him with one single, terrific burst. That is the recipe of the night-fighter squadrons, and it is proven by results.

So much for the machines—what of the men? All volunteers, they are men with a natural *flair* for the peculiar difficulties and delights of night fighting. They live and work under a special regime, designed to produce the utmost fitness—mental and physical—for the job. Their diet is designed to include special quantities of Vitamin A and other constituents known to influence night vision and dark adaptation. While awaiting a "customer" in their dispersal huts round the aerodrome at night, they may either wear darkened lenses, or have subdued lighting to preserve their "dark adaptation."

They have special oxygen equipment in their machines, and commence to use it at much lower levels than is normal in day fighting, for a poor oxygen level in the blood is a potent factor in reducing night vision. Encounters with the enemy may result from sheer chance, or from our pilots own observations, or by the results of radio-location plots radioed to the fighters from the ground. How much we have progressed in this direction recently—for not all may be disclosed, by a long way—we shall both see and hear for ourselves if the *Luftwaffe* attempts to revive the Battle of Britain by night.

IF FOG OR MIST SHOULD COME UP DURING THE NIGHT, this is how night fighters are assisted to land—*Drawing by Roland Davies*

Mist or fog may have blown over the airfield while the night-fighter (or bomber) crews are out on a sortie: on their return, therefore, landing may be difficult. The runway on the aerodrome is edged with small, permanent lights; but large flares are needed when the visibility becomes poor. So the small squad of airmen, who are always at work when night operations are taking place, run along the edges of the runway placing and lighting "goose-neck" flares, which resemble watering-cans provided with wick and paraffin. Still more light may be needed. The squad lights larger flares which consist of buckets of paraffin topped with wire baskets holding the wick. Sometimes these flares are put in position before aircraft take off, but if this has not been done and visibility deteriorates quickly, the lives of the crew depend on the speed of the flare-path squad. Sometimes another runway has to be prepared before the aircraft return; at others the auxiliary electric lamps placed beside the permanent lamps have to be brought into use. The auxiliaries are laid in position for each operation. The permanent lights can be switched off, but the flares have to be doused by hand. The party is responsible also for the light guides which help the pilots to approach the runway at the correct angle. Even after the squadron's aircraft have landed, the men of the flare-path party stand by to cope with any aircraft diverted from other airfields owing to bad weather. They give the aircraft the light to land safely, but they get little of the limelight!



HOW THE R.A.F. SET OUT TO BEAT THE WEATHER AND THE COLD: Some types of flying kit "as now worn"—*Drawing by Roland Davies*

The flying kit of the R.A.F. is very varied. The battle-dress generally forms the base on which to add the warmer leather clothes. All airmen who fly on operations over the sea wear "Mae West" lifebelts, which, when inflated, can keep the wearer afloat until he can take to his raft. In some cases a life-saver is incorporated in the flying-suit. The latest "Mae Wests" have containers at the side in which papers and plans can be kept, and they are fastened under the legs in the manner shown in the drawing. In hot weather, a fighter pilot usually flies with little over his battle-dress except his "Mae West" and his parachute harness. In winter, some fighter pilots wear long stockings pulled high up to the thighs, and also find extra warmth in a woollen sweater. Various kinds of knee-boots are worn, both by fighter pilots and bomber crews. The general kit for fighter pilots in winter, however, is helmet, fur-lined leather coat, and stockings which are turned down over the warmly-lined boots. For long operational flights in winter, bomber crews wear electrically-heated suits. The types of flying clothes our airmen use vary greatly; but nothing is spared to increase their comfort and safety, and to give them the equipment they need for their arduous work

DESTROYER TO THE RESCUE

An Appreciation of the Navy's "Maids of all Work"

By ARTHUR BARRETT

LOYAL, Lively, Matchless, Marksman, Gallant, Hero, Impulsive, Intrepid, Fame, Echo, Fortune, Eclipse, Fury.

One could compose quite a tolerable poem from the names of the hundreds of destroyers now on the Navy List, and many a better poem has sprung from a worse source. Exactly how many of these naval maids-of-all-work there are it is virtually impossible to say, even if the Navy would let us. Certainly we are building them as fast as we can—"there can never be too many destroyers," as a First Lord once said—and not infrequently the Admiralty has to "regret to announce" that one or more of them is lost. Yet there can hardly be fewer than 300 destroyers, either afloat or building under the White Ensign at the present time.

They are young men's ships, on the whole; if you have to pack boilers and engines developing 48,000 h.p., six 4·7-in. guns, eight torpedo-tubes, pom-poms, depth-charges and 200 men, all in a vessel 354 ft. long by 37-ft. beam, there is not much room left for the comforts elderly bones require. Consequently, the personnel tends to be tough and young—not quite so young as they are in "The Trade," as the submarine service is known, but still younger than most. Moreover, in a ship with a complement of ten or a dozen officers and 180 men, the personal element is enhanced to a degree unknown even in the "matiest" of the big ships. This is undoubtedly one of the attractions of destroyer service for the men of the Royal Navy.

Destroyers vary greatly in size and hitting power. The latest are the Lightning class, some of whose details are given above—the biggest yet built for the Navy, and really more like young cruisers. But there are still plenty of last-war destroyers in service, still capable of their 30 knots when occasion demands, and it is likely to be demanded on every conceivable occasion.

If an aircraft crashes "in the drink" it is most likely to be a destroyer that will pick up the crew; it was a destroyer that rescued the Dutch Royal Family after the fall of Holland; it was a destroyer that rescued 300 British seamen from the *Altmark*; to destroyers fell the duty of providing covering fire during the Dieppe raid; it was a destroyer laden with dynamite that wrecked the lock-gates at St. Nazaire; and it was a small group of destroyers that saved a Russian convoy on New Year's Eve from a much superior German force.

No other class of vessel, surely, can have seen such varied active service. Perhaps it is because of the varied jobs that come their way that destroyer crews never seem to get "browned-off" or disgruntled. Certainly the fine reception they give any distressed seafarers they may come across is a source of frequent comment. During the evacuation of Norway, for example, several nurses were rescued from a waterlogged lifeboat. After hot drinks they had a much-needed sleep in the skipper's quarters, and woke to find their uniforms

IN THE SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC: CATALINA RECONNAISSANCE PLANES ATTACK ONE OF A GROUP OF FIVE JAPANESE DESTROYERS OF ODD SHAPE off Russell Island. One direct hit and two near hits damaged this vessel, which was left burning. Note, in the above picture, the curious design of the hull and of the forward "well" in front of the bridge on this destroyer of the Mutuki class.—*Drawing by Wm. McDowell*

THE NEVER-ENDING WORK OF THE BRITISH DESTROYER IN RESCUES AT SEA. A Tribal class destroyer (of 1,870 tons) saves twenty-five people in a small boat after having been directed to the spot by a Sunderland flying-boat of Coastal Command—*Drawing by Wm. McDowell*

Throughout this war it has fallen to the lot of the destroyer to effect rescues like this at sea. Aircraft may locate the small boats, but it is usually a destroyer which has to take the shipwrecked mariners aboard and bring them safely back to harbour

neatly washed and ironed, and the aprons starched! With their great power (many destroyers have engines nearly as powerful as cruisers of far greater size) and unrivalled powers of manœuvre, destroyers are the ideal ships for attempting rescue work when some large vessel, be it aircraft-carrier or liner, has been torpedoed. Under the guidance of her skipper, his commands instantly translated into action by the men in the engine-room, a few propeller revs. ahead, next astern, the little destroyer may run her stern right up against the tilting bilges of the stricken giant. Certainly, however hazardous the occasion, she will not abandon the attempt until every possible man has been picked up.

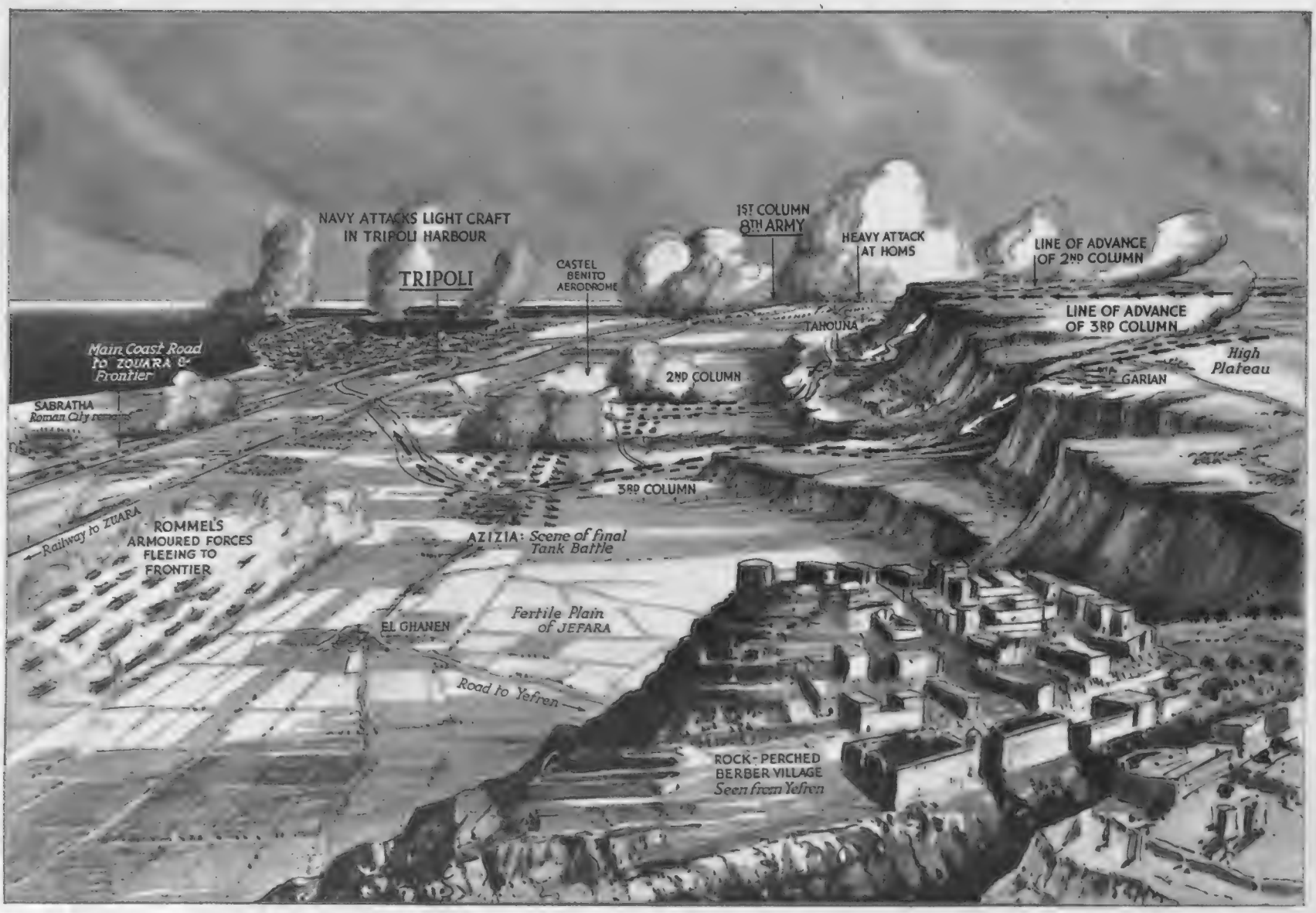
How many people can be packed aboard a destroyer? It seems almost impossible to set a limit. There were 300 British merchant seamen imprisoned aboard the *Altmark*. Yet the little *Cossack* took off every man of them, although even in normal times her own crew of 200 men find little living-room to spare. Her galley must have worked hard that day, for German prison fare is not too generous!

Probably it is the very toughness of their own lives that makes destroyers' crews so quick to do what they can to assist distress in others. When on duty, if action is probable, they may have to keep up their "four hours on, four hours off," for days on end. For the gun crews it may well mean sleeping (or trying to) in a corner of the deck, as near the gun as possible—no joking matter in the North Atlantic. Yet they never "go sour on the job," and though about ninety of these gallant little vessels have so far gone down on active service, their ever-increasing fleet of sisters are as venturesome and daring as ever.

On right—**THE 20,000-TON LINER WHICH SANK ONE U-BOAT and drove off another**
—*Drawing by Wm. McDowell*

The *Duchess of Bedford* is a C.P.R. liner: under the command of Captain W. G. Busk-Wood, O.B.E., she has just destroyed by gunfire a U-boat at 100 yards' range; immediately afterwards she engaged and drove off a second submarine. The first vessel's periscope was sighted at a distance of only 400 yards: a heavy sea was running, and the wash made by the liner got underneath the U-boat, lifting her forepart and conning-tower out of the water as in the upper drawing. The liner's first shell hit the water and ricochetted the whole length of the U-boat; the second caused a terrific explosion. The bow of the submarine rose out of the water some 30 ft. and the U-boat sank. No sooner had the first vessel vanished than a second periscope became visible about a mile off. One of the liner's guns went into action, and after the first three rounds the submarine dived and did not appear again

On left—In the Japanese Navy, the destroyers of the Mutuki class are vessels of 1,315 tons which carry a complement of 150. They are of curious construction, inasmuch as they have a characteristic "well" between the break of the forecastle and the bridge. This "well" is equipped with a set of three torpedo-tubes. The form of the bows of the vessels of this class is typical of most of the later Jap destroyers. In the picture on the left the destroyer is taking avoiding action under attack by the Catalinas.



HOW TRIPOLI FELL TO THE EIGHTH ARMY: THE THREE-PRONGED ATTACK which preceded the occupation of the last city of the Italian "Empire" in North Africa. General Montgomery advanced in three columns: one went by way of Homs; the second over the high plateau to Tahouna; the third by way of Garian and Azizia, where the final tank battles took place—*Drawing by Percy Home*

THE GREAT CITY OF TRIPOLI as seen from the air: This was the capital of Tripolitania and the heart of Mussolini's African Empire. During recent years it has been developed into the most considerable port in the southern central Mediterranean

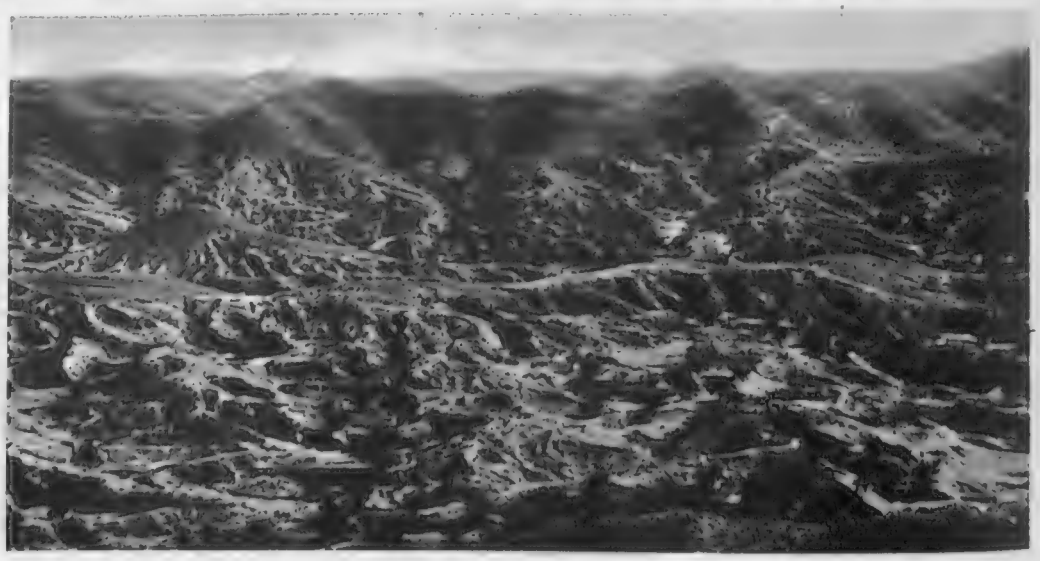
Both these columns came towards the Tripolitanian capital by roads which took them over the high ground, emerging finally at the foothills overlooking Azizia and Castel Benito aerodrome. The capital lay just beyond.

The westernmost column raced forwards to Garian, a military post on the high plateau. Here road and rail descend precipitously to the plain. Pressing on, the Seventh Armoured Division reached Azizia, on the plain, and here fought the final tank action before entering the capital.

The first column, advancing by way of Homs, appears to have encountered hot opposition from the high ground overlooking the roads to Tripoli. This had to be overcome before the gateway to Tripoli could be opened.

In the drawing above, Azizia appears in the centre of the scene. In the right foreground is shown one of the rock-perched villages near Yafren, characteristic of the Jebel Nefusa, which is dotted with rock-perched townlets and castles, some of which are of great age. This village clings to a gorge which runs down to the plain from Tamalilt, a strikingly-shaped mountain. In the left foreground Rommel's forces are indicated, moving in the direction of Zuara and the frontier of Tunis.

Below—**THE COUNTRY IN WHICH THE MARETH LINE IS LOCATED IN SOUTHERN TUNISIA:** The craggy mountain range of Matmata forms the background of the fortifications built by the French and known as the "Mareth Line." It is known that the remnants of Rommel's broken army have now reached this line of forts



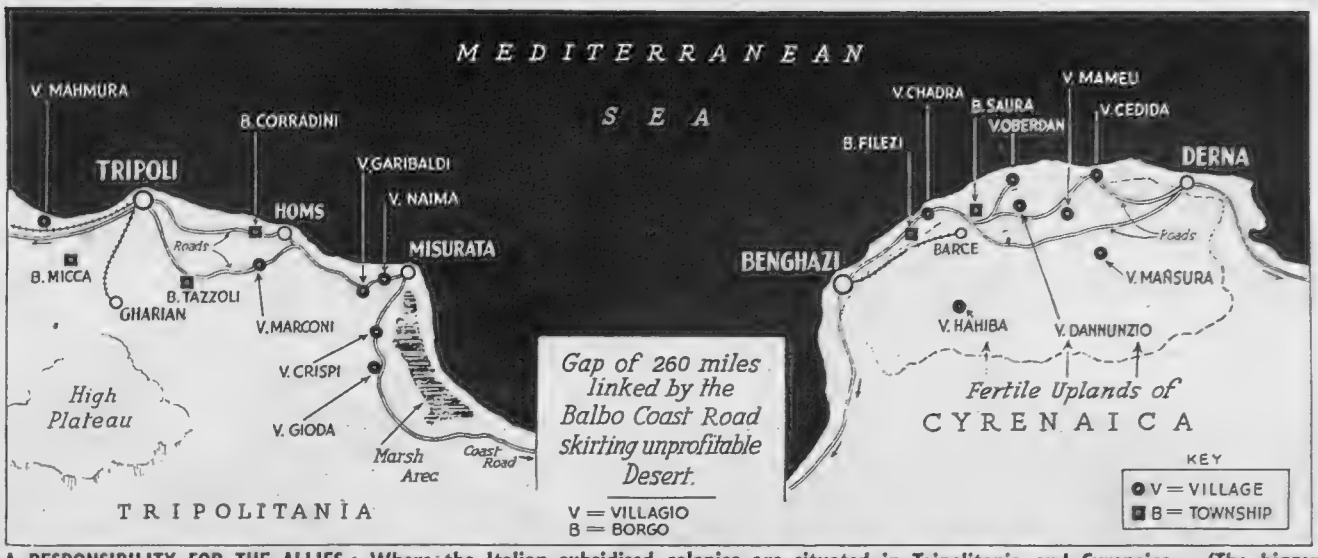
The CAPTURE of TRIPOLI

On January 23, 1943, by the Eighth Army Under General Montgomery

WHEN the Eighth Army advanced from the Wady Zemzem against the fleeing forces of Marshal Rommel, the attack was split up by General Montgomery into three columns. One of these pressed along the main tarmac road to Homs; the second and the third branched out into the open country to the north-west. When they had penetrated the wild wady country for some miles and had reached Seddada, the second and third forces again split apart; one made for Tahouna, a small town on the further side of the high ground overlooking the plain of Tripoli; the other made for Beni Ulid, another small town perched on the high ridge beneath the eastern end of the Jebel Nefusa.

The ITALIAN COLONIES in LIBYA

Which have Now Passed into British Keeping Until the End of the War



A RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ALLIES: Where the Italian subsidised colonies are situated in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica. (The bigger townships are indicated by black squares, and the villages by black circles)

WITH Tripoli at last in the hands of the Allies, all Italy's African Empire has fallen—Eritrea, Italian Somaliland, Abyssinia and Libya. These countries have now to be administered for civil life. Abyssinia has returned to its native Government; Italian Somaliland is under British military authority; and Eritrea is under the Allies. Libya presents a different and more difficult problem. Italy had been bent upon turning the whole area from Tripoli to Egypt (which they designated Libya, but which is generally separated into Tripolitania and Cyrenaica) into an Italian colony populated with as large a number of Italians as could be planted there. The previous inhabitants—the Arabs—were to be gradually pressed out of the fertile areas into the desert land.

Now the British Government is faced with the Arabs and Italians, mutually antagonistic: the Italian colonists settled so recently on their new farms, and the Arabs eagerly desiring a return to the land from which they have been dispossessed. Protection will be necessary for such colonists who remain against the revengeful Arabs.

When the British Army under General Wavell made its remarkable sweep across Libya early in 1941, driving the large Italian army before it, they encountered these Italian colonists when they reached that part of Cyrenaica, north of the Jebel Akhdar—from Derna to Barce. It was all new country to the war correspondents, who then wrote about these new farms, dazzling in their whiteness, scattered about like "lumps of sugar" on the green slopes of the hills. They described how eagerly the colonists had welcomed the British army, who would protect them from the Arabs, who had already begun looting and destroying the moment the Italian army had retreated. The colonists had not been evacuated—the British advance had been too rapid—and they were still working on their farms, trusting to the humanity of the British authorities. Indeed, General Graziani had assured them: "The British are gentlemen. They will treat you kindly. If you want anything ask them for it."

When a civilian authority was set up in Benghazi, this question of the colonists loomed large. Was the British Government to take over the whole of Italy's liabilities with regard to the colonists?—no small matter at the time. To-day, with the whole Libyan colony in Allied hands, the problem looms up again. As the correspondents followed the Army for the third time over the Cyrenaican plateau, they made no mention of the new farms or the Italian settlers. It seems unlikely that they can have been shipped home, to carry the conviction of Italy's impotence to protect them; but whether they retired to Tripolitania or bravely stayed on the farms has not been definitely stated. When the Eighth Army moved into the new area of Tripolitania, mention was made of those colonies situated near Misurata and Homs.

It was in October 1938 (just after the Munich Settlement) that 20,000 colonists made a spectacular arrival at Tripoli. They were welcomed by Marshal Balbo, Civil Governor of Libya, who was enthusiastic over his colonisation scheme, and then all assembled to see the unveiling of the equestrian statue of the Duce, waving the sword of Islam. Much time and thought had gone into the preparation for this happy day.

The colonists had been chosen with extreme care. They came as family groups, not less than eight in a family; all of them had to be peasants used to the land; they had to be healthy and strong and fervent Fascists. Most of them came from the north of Italy, all eager to gain land of their own in the new colony. They were fully informed of the way in which they would work for the land, and when the time was near for their departure, they were given explicit directions what things they could take with them, how they should pack them, what to do with the articles they would not require and, finally, what clothes they must wear on the journey—their best and smartest, and if they possessed it, any uniform, provided it was in good repair.

It was a bold experiment to put down so many thousand settlers on almost desert, waterless land, but the Duce was filled with the splendid hope of reviving the prosperous settlements of Greece and Rome. Italy hoped to obtain an outlet for her large population; to settle a permanent body of Italians in Libya; to produce wheat and oil to make the colony self-supporting in case of war; and to gain a body of men ready to fight for their own land. The land itself was a difficulty—quite unsuitable for the usual type of settler. It needed great outlay of capital to prepare it: grasses planted to hold the desert sand, scrub to be cleared, artesian wells sunk and aqueducts and storage-tanks constructed.

When the colonists arrived at their numbered destination, each family found a small, well-constructed house, containing simple furniture, and stocked with enough food for the next few days. They were expected to start work at once. For the first year the farmer would earn wages, after which there would be a period of profit-sharing. Everything is entered in the farmer's estate book—how much he will have to pay for his farm and all the goods he buys from the store are on one side, while on the credit side is the money he obtains from the sale of his produce. At the end of twenty-five years he is supposed to have paid off the mortgage and to be full and free owner. Even then he has to carry out orders about the kind of crops to be grown, and he is still obliged to sell through the governmental offices.

The farms are scattered round a communal centre—the village—where there is a church, a school, a general store and the Fascist headquarters. Everything is brand-new, simple, on modernistic lines, built of concrete and shining white. Every farmhouse is precisely the same, in form and furnishing—no one has a jot of advantage over another.

The cost of these farms has been very considerable—the original outlay will probably never be recovered. As an experiment it has been watched with interest, and those who toured Libya at the invitation of the Italian Government were considerably impressed. The general impression of the various writers is one of admiration for the care, energy and enthusiasm of the organisation, while wondering whether colonists from democratic countries would submit to the drastic control of every detail of life

B. H.

THIS IS ONE OF THE LIBYAN COLONIST SETTLEMENTS, forming a centre for the whole area around: At fixed points throughout the colony, these settlements were formed as focal-points for the new Italian farmers and road-workers. A little fort, a little local administration bureau, a few shops, places for meetings—these served to give purpose and direction to the colonists' efforts, as well as to give them a sense of companionship. The various farmhouses were isolated, the life was hard and the conditions of work onerous: but each little colony had its centre such as the above to co-ordinate its activities and to provide social contacts

THE ITALIAN COLONIST FAMILY ARRIVE AT THEIR NEW HOUSE IN LIBYA: Here everything has been prepared in advance for their reception; and stretching out across the hundreds of miles along the coastal areas were thousands of such spots. The house is all ready for immediate occupation; a wall encloses the farmyard; there are large cattle-sheds and barns, all ready and installed with everything necessary for immediate use. The house is furnished; and the settlers can begin their agricultural labours right away, without an hour's delay

A BLACKSMITH'S SHOP OF THE R.E.M.E. IN THE DESERT, where the men work hard all day. Added to the heat of Libya, the men also have to put up with the heat of their furnaces, in order to keep the Eighth Army reinforced

A WELDER AT WORK on a damaged British tank at a Repair Unit's workshop behind the battlefront

THE CREATION OF R.E.M.E.

(The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers)

And How the Work of Their Expert Craftsmen Made Possible the Successful Campaigns in Libya and Tripolitania

Described by CHARLES GRAVES

THE almost incredible advance of the Eighth Army over 1,400 miles in ninety days would never have been possible except for R.E.M.E. That is a bald statement of fact. And yet thousands of people have not the slightest knowledge of this remarkable Corps, the only Corps formed since 1939 to be granted the prefix of "Royal." The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers—for that is what the initials stand for—were born on October 1 of last year. In some ways their history is like that of tank warfare. We invented it, the Germans developed it, and we have now improved on the Germans. The engineering side of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps was on active service in 1917. In 1939 the approved peacetime establishment was 363 officers and a proportionate number of men. But the paper strength was only 214 officers.

Rommel's swift advance towards Egypt owed much of its success to the skill and courage of the German maintenance crews who mended both German and British tanks on the battlefield and sent them back into action within a few hours, thus copying the original idea of the engineering branch of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

The importance of this tank and transport recovery organisation was soon apparent, but nothing much was done about it immediately. In our British way we appointed Sir William Beveridge, a civilian, to be Chairman of a Committee to report on skilled men in the Services. The Report, when completed, was found to contain the suggestion that a Corps of Mechanical Engineers should be formed; and Lieut.-General R. M. Weeks, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., then Director-General of Army Equipment and now Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff, was asked what he thought of the idea. General Weeks promptly decided that it was first-class, and the first steps in forming the R.E.M.E. were taken. General Weeks can therefore be regarded as the legitimate father of the Corps.

It was a bold move, for it meant a reorganisation affecting thousands of soldiers and hundreds of establishments. As a first stage, all the engineering personnel of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and a proportion of the maintenance engineers of the Royal Army Service Corps and the mechanical maintenance and electrical technicians of the Royal Engineers were grouped under Major-General Rowcroft, Director of Mechanical Engineering at the War Office.

Already British Army organisation has triumphed, and this can be said of the Middle East campaign. Never in British history has an army fought with more efficiently-maintained weapons. Guns which develop faults, tanks which break down, motor lorries which stall, wireless sets which give faulty performances, predictors and range-finders which are inaccurate, reduce an army's fighting efficiency to zero. It is the responsibility of the R.E.M.E. that these things do not happen.

How was it done? Well, the centralisation of the engineering services not only produced a pool of skilled men, but gave wider scope to the echelon repair services in the field, which, as I have said, was introduced in the last war by the engineering side of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, and later adopted by the Germans. The first effect of the reorganisation was the establishment of a complete and direct chain of administration from Major-General Rowcroft in Whitehall to the R.E.M.E. officers in the field who act as technical officers to Brigade and Divisional Commanders. Secondly, it provided every unit in the Army which used mechanical or scientific equipment with a highly-trained detachment capable of maintaining the necessary equipment in action. They are responsible for the maintenance and repair of every piece of equipment in the Army except tents, harness and saddlery. Their activities cover tanks, all vehicles, small arms, machine-guns, radiolocation, wireless instruments, telecommunications, watches and coast defence and searchlight equipment.

By means of the flexible echelon system a small detachment of trained men can get a broken-down tank on the move by replacing the damaged engine and sending the broken apparatus back to a workshop which has facilities for its repair. Defects which in the last war meant that a weapon had to be sent from France to Woolwich for servicing can now be repaired in the field in a matter of hours. The pivot of the echelons is the base workshop, which is static, and the semi-mobile shop on the lines of communication. The base shop is a huge industrial concern on an assembly-line mass-production plan worthy of Detroit

ARMY FIGHTING VEHICLES ARE KEPT FIT BY MECHANICS OF THE R.E.M.E.: A Scout car in this country is here being hoisted on to a ramp for a final check and adjustment after the test run

R.E.M.E. BLACKSMITHS AT WORK AT A FIELD WORKSHOP: All members of such "Light Aid Detachments" are skilled craftsmen, and in addition they have also been trained as first-rate fighting soldiers

TANK RECOVERY BY THE R.E.M.E. DURING THE LIBYAN BATTLES: *On left*—a damaged tank is located; one track is missing, thus rendering the fighting vehicle incapable of movement. *On right*—a British cruiser tank undergoes repairs at a Tank Repair Depot near the front line in the desert

The third echelon is almost as well equipped as the base workshop, but designed to be movable. The second echelon, the mobile workshops which are really heavy lorries equipped with breakdown outfits, effects the heavy replacements and the repairs which its machinery can handle in a short time, and still keep pace with the advance of the division or the brigade to which it is attached. The first echelon, the light aid detachment which goes into action in trucks and tractors with tanks, with the artillery regiments and with the infantry brigades, has the most spectacular job. This consists of pulling tanks and other war vehicles from the battlefield under heavy fire and repairing them under enemy bombing. Since October, the R.E.M.E have recovered from stale battlefields an unbelievable amount and variety of enemy vehicles and arms. At the same time, their recovery and repair units are right up with the advanced elements, a light aid detachment being behind each front-line unit.

One of the most important duties of the R.E.M.E. is to tell the Brigadiers, Divisional Commanders and even General Montgomery himself whether the equipment their armies are getting is all right, and what changes are desirable in the design or power of our fighting vehicles and guns. Each division has about 1,000 R.E.M.E. officers and craftsmen—as the privates are called. They have worked impossible hours under impossible conditions to enable the British Army to capture Tripoli. They have allied to the skill of the factories a native talent for improvisation and improvement which has increased tremendously the fighting power of the troops. Actual fighting creates conditions which cannot be foreseen in the drawing office or the factory floor. But the modifications which the R.E.M.E. have introduced on the spot to suit the weather conditions which vary from boiling sunshine to bitter sleet, very fine sand to the stickiest mud, have made it possible to continue using their weapons irrespective of everything. What is more, these engineers have sent back a stream of ideas for new weapons and devices which are already having a decisive effect on land and air warfare.

This is an engineers' war. We have only to read the Middle East communiqués to understand that. We must remember that our enemies are highly skilled, technically-minded, brave and ingenious. So R.E.M.E. need men and youths with character, intelligence and determination. They must be fighting men as well as being technicians.

The light aid detachments consist of one officer or warrant officer and fifteen to twenty men. Each Royal Artillery and Royal Armoured Corps Regiment, each Field Squadron of the Royal Engineers, each Reconnaissance Battalion and each Infantry Brigade has its own personal light aid detachment. Every brigade has a workshop under the command of a Major; while individual fitters, electricians and armourers are attached to every Infantry Battalion. Promotion is fast. There are Brigadiers under thirty-five and Colonels of the age of thirty.

When the Eighth Army began its advance on October 23, the R.E.M.E. began work under full-scale battle conditions for the first time. The mobile workshops wrestled with final desert adjustments, modifications and last-minute repairs. Then, when the hundreds of British guns started their terrific barrage from the Alamein line, the R.E.M.E. recovery sections moved forward to their most vital task of keeping the minefield lanes open for the advance of our tanks. The sappers, working with their traditional speed and skill, first cleared a certain number of pathways through the enemy minefields, but it was inevitable that some of our tanks moving forward in the dark should deviate by accident or otherwise encounter an undetected mine. It was foreseen that such accidents could wreck the whole attack, since a tank with its tracks blown off might block the narrow passage and render the entire lane useless for a vital period. This was equally true of all the other places such as Tobruk, Benghazi, El Agheila, Misurata, and Tripoli, where Rommel had time to lay minefields.

A PARTY OF R.E.M.E. TROOPS clearing a minefield to enable a recovery vehicle to get through. Personnel of the Corps only clear the portions of minefields covered by the operations of the job they have in hand

To overcome this danger, the minefield task force was provided by R.E.M.E., and their instructions were to keep the lanes clear at any cost. Everybody who has seen an ordinary lorry being rescued from a roadside ditch will appreciate the amount of gear and space necessary to move a 30-ton tank without one or both of its tracks. The advance had barely started when calls for R.E.M.E. assistance began to come in. Surrounded by mines and meeting a hail of enemy machine-gun and artillery fire, the huge recovery equipment lorries roared to the scene of the casualty. Men and vehicles were unavoidably lost. But the lanes were kept clear, and the tanks thus recovered were in many instances repaired by R.E.M.E. experts operating behind our guns, and sent back into action in a few hours. Some tanks, during the advance, were repaired six times for normal breakdown as well as for battle casualties. Improvisation was used with the greatest success. Some of the tractors operating in a rain-soaked district became completely waterlogged. A R.E.M.E. Brigadier and a subaltern (who has since died of wounds) jointly worked out the solution. This was to remove the tracks of captured German tanks and fit them to our tractors, which thus became half-tracted vehicles able to pull their loads under almost any conditions.

As the battle surged forward, the R.E.M.E. faced new problems. Fighting vehicles of all sorts littered the battlefield, and attempts to recover them in daylight generally drew heavy shell-fire from the enemy. Matters were not much better at night. First of all, it was necessary for an officer to carry out a reconnaissance to find out whether the tank was worth immediate recovery, and many fruitless and hazardous journeys had to be made. For a tank may appear almost undamaged from a distance. But sometimes the inside revealed that it had been set on fire. Most deadly were the enemy snipers, who used knocked-out tanks as cover for their nightly work, and sometimes remained hidden in them during the following day.

There are dozens of tales of individual adventure.

Clever planning, plus the adaptability, courage and skill of R.E.M.E. personnel, has given the Eighth Army—and will give the First and any other British Army—a repair organisation second to none in the world which even the American Army has already begun to copy from us.

IN THE WESTERN DESERT THERE IS A BLACKSMITH'S SHOP: Here tanks and guns are repaired on the spot. The main workshop is dug well into the ground, well protected and camouflaged, and much valuable work has been carried out here. In this particular corner men were able to work in the shade, under the camouflage of the Shop

AWAY FROM THESE WARS. . . .

Memories and Thoughts of the Years Between

—A Fortnightly Causerie **By J. G.**

SOME Thoughts on Honours and Rewards.—In wartime the bestowal of honours and rewards is a difficult, and not always grateful, task. Even if, as some think, it should be restricted to deeds of daring by fighting men, it would be often a tricky and ungrateful choice *inter primos inter pares*.

But this war is the first "people's war," and universally accepted as such, and the Home Front has a new importance, and deserves its share of recognition; and fairly and democratically it is receiving it. So, twice yearly, the "great divide" is made and announced, and some hearts are warmed and many hearts, no doubt, are broken by it. A dreadful job for those who help and advise the fountain of honour.

I should say that in no war in our times have so few undeserved honours and rewards been bestowed. I am quite sure almost all have been fully earned for good work; certainly every fighting honour carries this time a guarantee of merit which not always accompanied many D.S.O.s and M.C.s awarded between 1914 and 1918. And what is true of the fighting is true, too, I believe, of the civilian Home Front.

DERWENT HALL, IN THE DERBYSHIRE VILLAGE OF DERWENT, which is to disappear under the Lady Gower Reservoir

The building of the dam in North Derbyshire, which will form a huge new reservoir, is nearing completion: to-day, the task of pulling down the houses in the village of Derwent is being carried out apace—and soon the site will be submerged. In a month or two, flood-waters will race across the fields and the picturesque spot seen here will disappear for ever. Derwent Hall, the "big house" of the locality, has been partly demolished, everything of value having been removed: the building in the foreground of the above picture is the private Chapel of the Hall

But in recent years, and sharply of late, the difficulties have increased. For one source of front-rank honours at least is a well-spring which has grown stagnant and run rather dry. Our "order" of democracy has undergone startling changes in the last years, and ever since the passage of the Parliament Bill, the whole problem of the bestowal of peerages, and steps in the peerage, has become beset with difficulty and fraught with the dangers of inconsistency.

The House of Peers remains, an estate of the realm shorn of much of its former power, not shorn of all its authority and usefulness. While it remains a part of our Constitution, it clearly needs periodic recruitment. But, in so far as the House of Lords stands as a justification of the practice of the bestowal of hereditary titles it is more and more brought under the guns of criticism through the "bloodless" revolution in our social theories which this war has brought about. Our statesmen and thinkers and publicists continually base their plans and hopes of a new and happier world order in part at least upon the general acceptance by peoples of goodwill of a final smashing of class barriers, and of a new theory and practice of equality and fraternity. Our Allies increasingly reveal a dislike of our system of awarding hereditary and other titles, and it may be reasonably suggested that the whole subject seems to reveal to-day a perhaps justifiable "muddled thinking." We balk the issue, but sooner or later it must be faced. While the Wensleydale peerage case remains an authority and precedent, and while an hereditary Second Chamber remains a part of the Constitution, logic and necessity require that hereditary peers should be periodically recruited to that chamber. But to continue to create, as rewards of good service, *steps* in the peerage is no longer so easily justified, and that fact, it seems, is already being taken note of at the fountain-head.

To take haphazard examples: I personally feel that Lord Woolton's good work is not less valuable than was Addington's, when, after his brief Premiership in 1801 (or thereabouts), he was created Viscount Sidmouth. Indeed, so much more valuable that an Earldom or a *marquisate* ("the Marquis Marquis") would not be too high a reward in this line for the Food Minister. But how does that ancient practice of raising rank by rungs square with our new social order theories? Barons must no doubt still be created for two reasons: to secure representation of departmental political chiefs in the Upper House, and generally to recruit it; but *grades* of rank are no longer in tune with our fine new democratic theories (or so we are advised).

Grades in the Peerage.—When, therefore, Mr. X, after good work done as a Whip, and, for all I know, as a Service departmental chief, was raised to the peerage as a viscount, and not as a baron, something more than the necessary act of recruitment of experience to the Second Chamber was done. He was given a higher rank than was necessary (no doubt as a reward for his services, or as a sop to mitigate the extinction of his Parliamentary career). That is obvious enough. But it is not less obvious that the hour is approaching when ancient methods of rewarding good service must be re-examined to discover if they remain in tune with any proven change in our national social theories.

You may dismiss the problem as of no importance. But you will be wrong to do so. You see, this business of hereditary peerages was originally based on, and linked with, the possession of land, of political influence, of wealth. It has long ceased to be so linked. Dukes were formerly territorial princes, a rank apart. No dukedom has been created since that of Westminster, save in the case of Royalty. After 1874, "territorial princes" were found to be anachronisms. Is not the same true to-day of marquesses, earls and viscounts? And especially so of the higher grades, because with these, the courtesy titles accorded to younger sons and to daughters cease to be *unobtrusive* (honourables) and cannot be hid (lords and ladies). Labour peers have for years been created for political balance. Earls to-day sift their cinders and cook their own dinners, badly, on a gas-ring, "like you and me." There is no great anomaly or absurdity in their doing so: they can't divorce themselves of their handles until the State releases them from these burdens. But the point and pith of raising their now largely barren honours to a higher rung *have* disappeared.

Men who must recruit the Second Chamber may logically be required to sift their cinders as barons, wearing six silver balls on their coronets, but why add another ten balls to the weight of their headdress? You can't dismiss the problem as trivial, for it is built firmly into a far more valuable and important institution in our Constitution. The peerage is (or at least certainly was) a part of the fabric of the monarchy, which remains, after the declarations of the Statute of Westminster, the sole, the vital, link of the nations of the Commonwealth, and was never more firmly established in our hearts and theories than it is to-day.

The nobility was formerly the cement which linked the coping-stone with the wall bricks of our constitutional monarchy. It was at the least a filter, or a buffer, State. To-day it may be neither. To-day the throne may stand on its own legs, without a screen, without a prop, without a filter between it and democracy. "The King of Canada" is an excellent head of a State which does not encourage titles. Only in the oldest State in this Commonwealth of ours does a "buffer State" of hereditary nobles exist between the Throne and the common people. It is perhaps an anomaly now. The Old Country has not yet revised its ancient precedents, nor re-examined its new conditions. It has never modernised or rationalised practices and procedures originating in, and suitable to, an age of oligarchy, privilege and class distinctions

And there are grounds for the argument that in that neglect the course of the fountain of honour is made more difficult. Which leads on to another random query. If there be any colour for the belief that we as a nation, so long and so definitely anachronistic in our so-called democratic ideals, have at last moved forward to a conception of democracy more allied to that of America (and so more truly democratic), then indeed the methods of allotting honours and rewards (other than for valour) demand adjustment.

There is just as much logic in creating Mrs. Smith of Seven Dials (that glorious example of heroism in the "Blitz") Duchess of Seven Dials, as of creating Mr. X Viscount X for political services Another haphazard example: if you must give minor honours during the war to Home Guardsmen (and I think it a pity, save as immediate awards for *gallantry* on the home front), there is no justification at all for the ancient system of bestowing the "divide" by order of rank from titular colonels downwards. The "token" recognition of a unit's good work could equally well and more democratically be accorded at the bottom. These minor honours should go from the first direct to merit wherever it is acknowledged to exist. For the Home Guard (like many other war products) has been built up on the example of devotion of obscure and humble patriots, and not by staff work. In short, the whole problem is fraught with difficulty, is onerous and anxious for those who handle the ungrateful task and badly needs some clear thinking and realism, and the removal of anachronism and muddled ideas. That in practice to-day it is an honest and pure attempt to do an impossible task is unquestioned. No man who has received seasonal rewards and honours during this war has, I am sure, failed to deserve it. But merit cannot be recognised everywhere, and the suggestion that "token" recognition of a unit's good work may be democratically and logically better accorded by decorating a private than a senior officer is, even if novel, worth consideration.

If authority decorates the rank and file democratically on the Home Front (civilian), why not do the same on the Home Front (military)—that is, the Home Guard—which surely is (what is always claimed for it) the most truly democratic army ever raised? Such token of "good service" rewards should go to the privates, not to the senior officers, or at least *pro rata* to numbers in each category.

The fact that goods made of raw materials in short supply owing to war conditions are advertised in this publication should not be taken as an indication that they are necessarily available for export

The Shaftesbury Homes and "Arethusa" Training Ship

This Society never forgets in its education of the children to put first things first; and on November 7, forty-seven boys at the Twickenham Home received the Rite of Confirmation, thereby enabling them, in whatever quarter of the globe they may be in the future, to receive the Holy Sacrament. Headquarters address: 164, Shaftesbury Avenue London, W.C.2

AN ATTACK ON AN ITALIAN U-BOAT IN THE BAY OF BISCAY: The vessel was forced to take shelter in a neutral port—and here is the reason. Her damaged hydroplanes were jammed in the "rise" position and therefore she could not submerge after she was attacked.

This Italian vessel was found by Coastal Command aircraft on the surface in the Bay of Biscay. They left her so badly damaged that she was unable to return to her base and had to seek shelter in a neutral port. Two Sunderlands and a Wellington took part in the attack, and although the submarine was able to limp away she was seen by the crew of the last attacking aircraft to be settling down by the bows. This is how the vessel appeared on the second day of the attack. Her hydroplanes are jammed in the "rise" position. When this picture was taken, the Wellington was making an attack by depth-charges, and a burst is actually seen here amidships. At least ten of the crew were seen to jump overboard, and no attempt was made by those who remained on board the U-boat to man the guns

ITEMS OF WAR INTEREST

THE FUNERAL OF LIEUT.-COLONEL MAXWELL, M.P., who died of wounds in the Western Desert: On December 31, Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. G. A. Maxwell, M.P., was buried at the Military Hospital at Heliopolis. He was in command of Signals in an Armoured Division, and died of wounds received in battle in Egypt. He was Member for West Norfolk, and was formerly Private Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for War in 1938-39. This picture was taken at the graveside at Heliopolis during the military burial service

A BOX-KITE AIDS A RUBBER RAFT'S RADIO: Men of the U.S. Army Air Force demonstrating a new rubber raft for airmen brought down, or forced to bale out, over the water. The box-kite acts as an antennæ for the radio-sending set which is carried in the raft. Also included in the equipment is a rubberised sheet to collect rain-water for drinking

W.R.N.S. "TORPEDO-MEN" IN TRAINING—Commander G. Veal hands out torpedo badges to those who have "passed out": The course which these girls have undergone lasts six weeks, following four weeks of preliminary instruction at a Government Training Centre. No Wren, so far, has passed out with less than 85 per cent. of marks! They are taught to maintain and service the electrical fittings of Coastal craft, gun circuits, telephones, lights, motors, search-lights, torpedoes and depth-charges. A house has been fitted up for practical instruction and as a lecture-room: practical instruction on torpedoes and training on depth-charges is given in a garage. The W.R.N.S. quarters are only a few paces away

THE BUS-CONDUCTOR'S IDEA WHICH NOW SAVES LIFE AT SEA: A home-made shielded light on the bus lapel of bus-conductors in London gave Mr. C. W. Wood, a staff officer at the Ministry of War Transport, the greatest life-saving inspiration of the war. This is a red lamp which, switched on in the water, has brought rescue to thousands of seamen and airmen who might otherwise have perished in the darkness. The lamp weighs under 8 oz. and gives 20 hours of light: it is normally attached to the seaman's life-jacket. Mr. Wood received the M.B.E. in the New Year's Honours List for his invention

The World of Books—By Vernon Fane

The FRENCH MOTIF in FACT and FICTION

Combined Training and the Dieppe Raid; Simenon Without Maigret; Gangsters, Murders and Black Marketeers; Fifth Column in Fiction

IN this unassuming account of adventure, sparingly described by one who was both spectator and participant, we cannot help feeling that achievement has surpassed intention. WE LANDED AT DAWN (Gollancz. 7s. 6d.) was clearly intended to be an accurate record of what Mr. A. B. Austin saw of British and Dominion infantry in battle training and in ultimate assault; and it is expressly a tribute to the traditional and undiminished qualities of our all-time foot-soldier when he is well led and put against the enemy. But from the accuracy of this book there has come a perfection of balance that lies between the temptation to dramatise and the snare of that boastful understatement which is often regarded by ourselves as a national quality.

Mr. Austin has written faithfully, within the restrictions of an obviously lenient censor, much that he saw, heard and experienced during the months of combined training, carried out last summer, and in the Dieppe raid that followed. The result is a short book that is fine, sensitive and sympathetic, exciting, moving and—in a masculine way—tender and compassionate. We are made proud, but pride is quietly justified; we are shown courage, but the fear that had to be conquered is not hidden. And we are given the impression that Mr. Austin would happily have concealed from us the truth that he is not only a writer of integrity, but a fine soldier—with "correspondent" on his armband—and a modest comrade.

The new Simenon, which consists of the usual generous allowance of two complete short novels, should carry a word of warning with it. In neither story does Inspector Maigret appear, and although there is a violent death or two, there are no solutions on which the amateur reader-detective might sharpen up his deductive reasoning, since all is known to him from the start.

The first half of HAVOC BY ACCIDENT (Routledge. 8s.) is a new field for this writer to tackle, although he seems as composed and confident in it as ever. A coffee plantation in the Congo, a stolid French planter and a neurotic and avid Englishwoman are unfamiliar subjects for M. Simenon's creative talents; unfamiliar, but not unmanageable. He plays on the nervous tension of the three or four people concerned like a virtuoso, and the result is a vivid, even startling, little story, though certainly not Simenon at his best.

He is more at home in *The Breton Sisters*; a story of small lives, small ambitions and small jealousies, grim, and yet always human. Maigret or no Maigret—and I won't deny that I miss that sturdy little man—this is real Simenon, and that is very good indeed.

For Simenon has the precious gift of story-telling, and with it a restraint and an economy of style that many novelists might envy. It may be his own desire to graduate from detective fiction, and however much his readers may be inclined to regret that, they can have a reasonable hope that with Simenon (as the *affiches* of restaurants have it) "*tout est bon.*"

A factory-canteen manager, innocuously called Mr. Brown, slowing down production by tampering with the volume and tempo of "Music while you work," and surreptitiously listening to Zeesen, is the promising opening to Mr. Bernard Newman's latest spy thriller, BLACK MARKET (Gollancz. 8s. 6d.).

What connection can the broadcasts of the snarling Haw-Haw, the hi-jacking of lorries in the black-out, the number of chickens delivered to a West End restaurant, a provincial music-hall turn and a member of the crew of the Folkestone lifeboat have with each other—or with black-market operations for that matter?

As usual, Mr. Newman takes a personal hand in these adventures aided by the ubiquitous Papa Pontivy, who always insists upon the difficulties of catching illegal men by legal methods. It did not take these two (who, after all, had outwitted German agents in most European countries) long to determine the connection between widespread black-market activities and an attempt by the enemy to undermine morale and the nation's confidence in Lord Woolton. Listening at the window of a cottage near Cape Gris-Nez, Mr. Newman hears the whole sinister business discussed by Dr. Goebbels and Admiral Canaris ("Hitler's Master Spy").

How he got there, and how he and Pontivy subsequently take part in a Commando raid on Brueneval, the reader may like to discover for himself. He will find out something else, too. This is one of the most ingenious and one of the best of Mr. Newman's long list of thrillers.

A Reminder!
THE SALVAGE OF WASTE PAPER IS THE CONCERN OF EVERY CITIZEN IN WARTIME

THE WIDENING STAIN (Bodley Head. 7s. 6d.) is a good murder mystery with the unusual setting of a college library—unusual, that is, as a setting for dark and bloody deeds. The librarian's exact technique, the indexing and cross-indexing, the shelves and bays of rare manuscripts and early editions—all these things are accepted as a background for work and possibly for meditation, but scarcely for strangled screams and dripping daggers.

Mr. Bolingbroke Johnson, however, is apparently one of those writers who take their crimes where they find them, and, as in this instance, make the hair-raising best of them. He also possesses that quality which enhances a crime story by approximately 150 per cent.—a fine sense of humour, of which he makes felicitous use.

SHOOTING FROM A CROW'S-NEST: Chemical warfare is being waged on a Surrey farm from a unique turret 20 ft. high—but it is only orchard pests which are the casualties. The tops of the fruit-trees are sprayed with an insecticide at high pressure. Pipes are connected to permanent plugs throughout the orchards, and ground sprays are used at the same time. By these modern methods the fruit is ensured against blight

"The original occupant, obviously sentimental about his home," he writes, "had carved mottoes celebrating peace on the stone fireplace and on wooden panels. 'Peace rules the day, where reason rules the mind. . . .' The appropriateness of the mottoes had passed with time, for Professor and Mrs. Noble notoriously fought like tigers, largely about the economic interpretation of history. . . . At the mention of Pareto or Veblen the Noble children began to cry, knowing that all hell was about to break loose."

There is nothing, as you will probably have gathered, of the banal about this story, and I recommend it for that reason and because it is too well-constructed a mystery to be solved in the first few chapters.

THE CONQUEROR INN (Gollancz. 8s. 6d.) is Mr. E. R. Punshon's latest detective story, and a very good one, as those with good eyesight and a clear reading light will discover.

Mr. Punshon is as good a builder of plots as ever, and as skilled at unravelling them with scrupulous attention to the demands of logic. He has admirable flashes of humour, too, as witness the evidence of the Irish suspect who made his listener reel with his conception of an Ireland with all its inhabitants of one mind. The same Micky is a little sounder on the subject of foreign relations.

"We know what it is to do trade with the Germans. Your best they take and send you concertinas and aspirins."

An original criminal—if criminal he is—and to solve that problem there is no better way than to read this excellent mystery story for yourself.

DON'T TRY ANYTHING FUNNY (Peter Davies. 7s. 6d.) is by all odds the most extraordinary book of the week, by which I do not mean that it is the most distinguished. It is described as a Fifth Column novel, and it is written in the toughest of American argot. Filmgoers will recognise the brand.

"Frances said disdainfully: 'You 're the most suspicious man.'"

"Not suspicious. Just prudent and circumspect. . . . I like to live, you know. By the way, your slip is showing."

"Why don't you do something about it?" defiantly.

I reached over and pushed up her skirt a couple more inches. She had the legs of a frustrated Ziegfeld girl. An idea occurred to me. "Listen, did Fritz take his artillery with him?"

And so on, for a hundred and fifty-odd pages. There is a good deal of action, shootings and beatings-up, but they are brutal without being exciting, and not even the ingenious twist that Mr. James M. Fox has contrived in the last few pages redeems this novel from its consistent vulgarity.

THE NEW LONDON PLAYS

Reviewed by PHILIP PAGE

KING LEAR (St. James's).—To say, with truth, that there is now a boom in Shakespeare does not lessen the courage of Mr. Donald Wolfit in deciding to bring to a close his season at the St. James's Theatre with some performances of *King Lear*. Of all Shakespeare's plays, this is in every respect the most formidable. I have seen a fair number of famous players in the title-role and have found not one of them wholly satisfactory, with some wholly unsatisfactory. I would put that indefatigable enthusiast, Mr. Wolfit, at the top of the list. The ideal Lear is purely a matter of individual opinion, and I would not say that Mr. Wolfit attains to my ideal (although, as I have hinted, that may be well off the real centre of the target). But in this Lear I did find both nobility and poetry (some Lears have been so extravagantly demented that they have allowed the latter to be thrown altogether overboard), a satisfactory appearance, and a sense of tragedy not unduly swamped by lunatic horror. Here was the stage's most difficult job extremely well done. Hardly less difficult is the part of the Fool. There are those who declare that this is one of the most subtly interesting of all Shakespeare's characters. To me he is a pain in the neck and in all sorts of other places, with his whining sycophancy and his silly little quips and riddles; not even Launcelot Gobbo is so exasperating a bore. Mr. Richard Goolden, being a clever actor, made a good job of it. Mr. Eric Maxon made an equally good job of Gloucester, letting us off lightly in that dreadful Grand Guignol eye-gouging scene. Miss Iris Russell and Miss Ann Casson spat traditional venom as Goneril and Regan. Miss Rosalind Iden as Cordelia might have spat her filial sweetness rather more distinctly.

The Desert Song (Prince of Wales).—This is a story of the land of date-palms. It struck me that palms can date. London first saw this at Drury Lane sixteen years ago, when, except in the musical sense, it struck no new note. The present revival is lavishly presented and well done in every way; also, it has the advantage of that good singer and actor Mr. Harry Welchman, whom the years treat mercifully, in his original part. He has some luscious tunes to sing and so has his opposite number, Miss Eleanor Fayre, who is as easy on the eye as she is on the ear. Yet this is an outstanding case of the play being *not* the thing, "the thing" being its musical adornment. The real hero of *The Desert Song* is Sigmund Romberg, the composer. And a prize for heroic pluck is due to Mr. Frederic Bentley for supplying chatty, up-to-date fun in adverse circumstances.

Carl Rosa Opera Company.—Covent Garden Theatre having for some time been devoted to public dancing (*eheu fugaces!*), the Winter Garden is now having a season of grand opera. It is quite a number of years since the Carl Rosa Opera Company have visited Central London, and it is good to see, and hear, them again. The Winter Garden is a fine, large theatre, all that it should be acoustically, and this company does things in a big way, which is the way they should be done, grand opera being one of the few instances where it is permissible to judge a picture by its size. *La Traviata* was chosen for the opening performance. Early Verdi is not exactly my cup of tea; but the graceful old tunes were well sung, notably by Miss Joan Hammond, Mr. John Torney, Mr. Kingsley Lark and Mr. Dennis Noble. The staging was more than adequate, a full orchestra played admirably, and there was a vast and enthusiastic audience.

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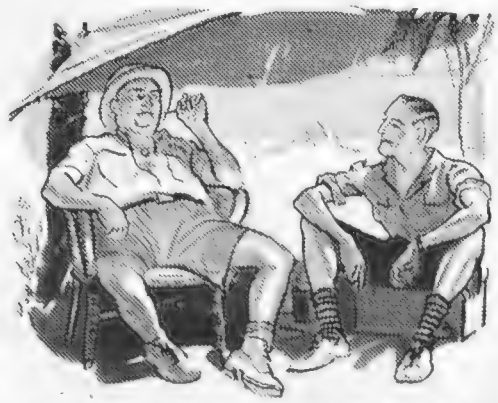

WISHFUL THINKING

"Very seasonable weather we're having, aren't we, Dillon?"

"*Grr!*"

"Dillon, you're disgruntled. You are feeling the heat. One might almost say that you have broken into a gentle glow."

"*Sweating like a battery mule.*"

"Don't be coarse now Dillon. Just because you're squatting in the desert there's no need to go on like a Bloomsbury intellectual."

"*Only wish I were in Bloomsbury now.*"

"Wish you were in Bloomsbury! Whatever for?"

"*So that I could jump into a cab and go to Mayfair. Stand myself a really good party. A party would do my morale no end of good.*"

"Wouldn't do you any good at all, Dillon. You'd only wake up the day after with a wicked headache and a taste in your mouth like the exhaust of a tank."

"*Don't you believe it. At this party that I wish I were at, there'd be lashings of Rose's Lime Juice. Gin and lime would go down well in weather like this, eh! Big long ones with soda-water and ice! Not a suspicion of a hangover either.*"

"Rose's Lime Juice! I'd almost forgotten. How one gets out of touch with civilization, squatting out here. Let's have a party now — a little chlorinated water—served warm!"

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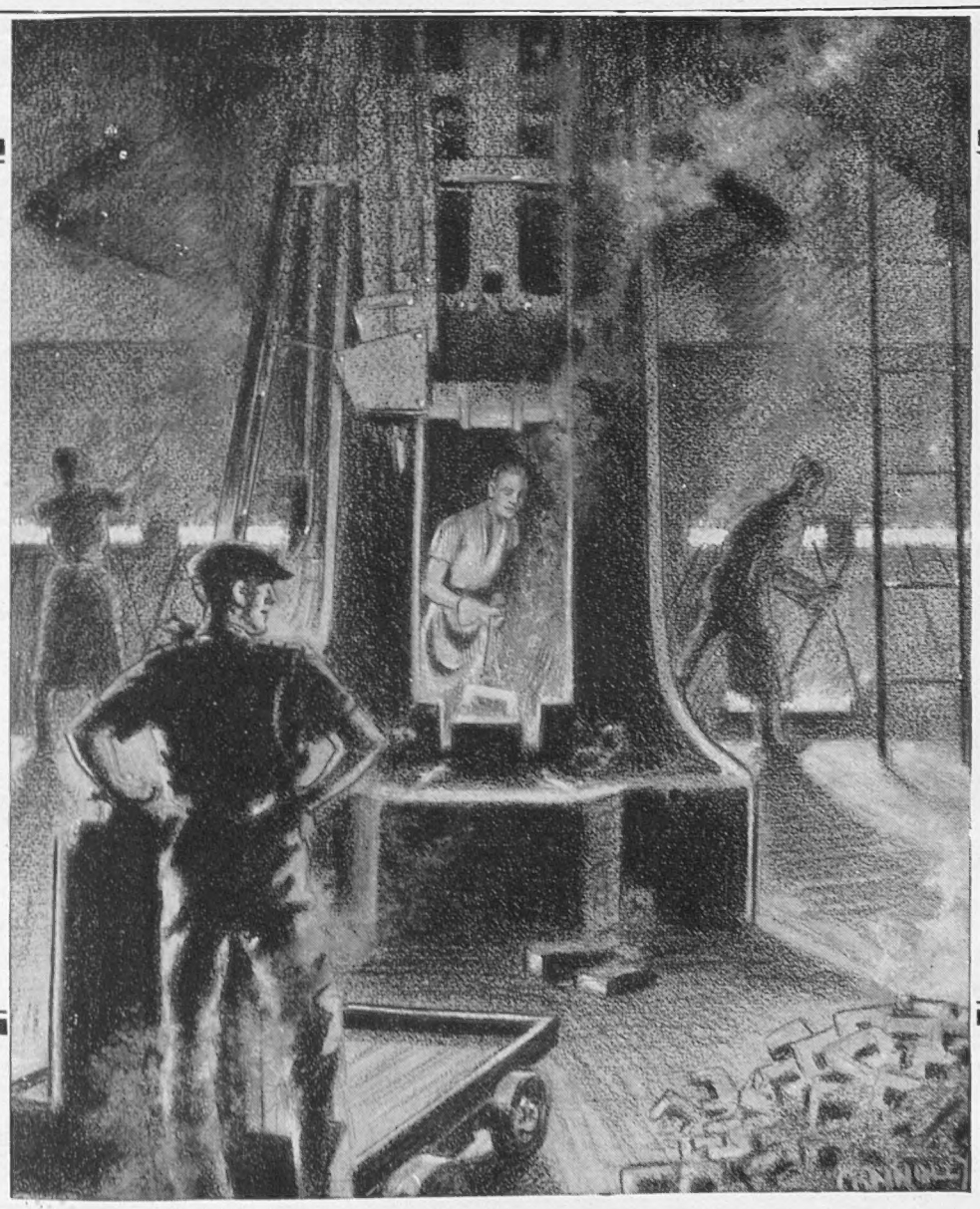

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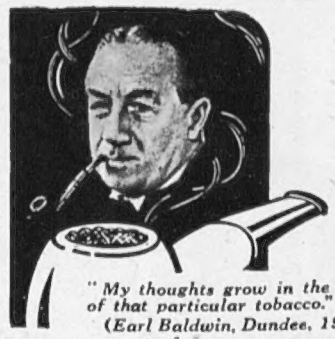

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